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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[A PERILOUS SITUATION.]

AILEEN'S LOVE STORY.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Christine's Revenge; or, O'Hara's Wife,"

"The Mystery of His Love; or, Who
Married Them?" &c., &c.

CHAPTER III.

THE AGITATORS.

Shall I crouch like a dog at their feet
While they cry that revenge is sweet,
And their knotted clubs all meet
On my shrinking head?

OLD BALLAD.

EDWARD ATHLONE was as brave as a lion. The idea of skulking up the narrow, steep stairs to the poor room of a poor peasant girl, and hiding there from a number of ruffianly men, was a detestable and degrading idea to him. He folded his arms, drew himself up, and said calmly:

"I am not a coward, Miss Darrell. If these men are murderers, better be dead than a coward. I have sought shelter in your house, am I to find death? I thought we Irish prided ourselves upon our hospitality."

"Throne for you, Mr. Edward Athlone," replied Aileen, speaking in her native idiom of the Galway mountain land, as was her wont when excited. "Throne for you, Mr. Edward Athlone, but, sure, these men are mad with the drink, savage as hungry wolves, and pitiless as the

cowld wind of the winter storm outside. Save yourself, young gentleman, for your mother's sake."

The young man shook his head, and smiled sadly.

"For the sake of the lady who loves you and you love."

"Am I sure, quite sure, that one human heart in this wide world loves me?" Edward Athlone asked himself. "There is sweet Emily Fairleigh. Would she forego one ball—one garden party—if she heard that I was dead; that my skull had been beaten in by the clubs of those drunken ruffians outside? Sweet Emily, to whom I have given my boyish love, and whom I would fain make my bride if the Fates and her Countess mother allow. Would she weep more than a few tears if she heard that I had died a mad dog's death in this wretched clay-floored kitchen? I suppose she would weep just twice. She would cry, and then she would be afraid of spoiling her lovely eyes, and she would bathe them in rosewater and prepare herself for new conquests. Ah, and I love her so."

"What the furies are yez keeping us out for?" shouted Dermot Darrell, and he shook the door of the house angrily. "It's snowing like old nick, and blowing like mad."

"Aye, then, and we're bathing the chilid, Dermot asthore," said the sweet, plaintive voice of Aileen. "Wait a moment, honey, and I'll open the door for yez all."

"Aye, and it's yourself knows how to get the soft side of me, Aileen acushla," answered the voice of Dermot. "But make haste, mavourneen, we're perished entirely out here in the cowld."

"Sir, sir, for the love of God, run up to my

room," said Aileen, returning to the kitchen wringing her hands, and looking up into the beautiful stern face of the son of the Earl of Clondell. "It's murther you Dermot will if he finds you here, even though his mother's present, and he will be mad. He will blacken my name. Aye, you don't know what our boys' tempers are when they are up, and they've had so much to try them of late."

"Blacken your name? asked the young man, with a puzzled frown. "How?"

"Don't ye see, my fine sir," cried Mrs. Darrell, "that my poor Dermot is mad for love of this girl, who is only mine by adoption, and he is that jealous—"

"I see," interrupted Athlone, and in a moment he was out of the room, up the stairs, and safely in hiding in the sanctuary of Aileen's chamber.

That peerless, but wily maiden then went and opened the door, and seven rough fellows rushed like a storm into the passage. In another moment they had filled the kitchen. Without ceremony they established themselves at what chairs and settles the room afforded. They were all talking at once, and amid the general hubbub, Aileen contrived to set forth the humble tea table.

There had been a round wheaten cake baking on the flat stone of the hearth. This she now took up and began to cut open and to butter. There was a jar of butter on the deal table. Tea was the grand meal of the Darrell family; the only meal which they could be said to enjoy, and at which they allowed themselves enough to eat.

Some of the men were smoking. Most of them were excited with whisky, the sons of Mrs.

Darrell included. It was not often that these hard-working young farmers allowed themselves to drink more whisky than was good for them. The family were far too poor to keep ale in the house, and thus the young Darrells were teetotallers for six days out of seven.

When they went to market at Athenry they were "treated" invariably by their friends, whom they treated in return, and thus the strong stuff gained power over their depressed minds, and their bodies, enfeebled by hunger and toil, and while the whisky warmed their thinly-clad limbs, it set their brains on fire and made them reckless, unreasonable, and fierce. They had not taken very much, either of those fine, handsome sons of Mrs. Darrell.

The Earl of Clondell would number among his guests that very night in his Castle of Athlone several fine young gentlemen, who after the fatigue of the hunting field, for there had been much hunting up to this afternoon of the snow-storm with the Clondell pack—the earl, we repeat, numbered among his friends several fine gentlemen, who drank more champagne, beer, and even brandy in a day than the Darrells drank of their potheen in two, and not one of the said fine gentleman would betray by voice or sign that he had taken more than was good for him.

But then the said gentlemen had excellent dinners and hearty breakfasts every day of their lives. They wore soft wool next their skins, and warm broadclothes over the wool, and when they went into the air they were wrapped in furs.

Dermot wore ragged gaiters, coarse grey stockings, rough old shoes encrusted with mud. His corduroy coat was so old that a sarcastic young man—a copying clerk in a lawyer's office in the village of Clondell, a youth who had fallen in love with the beautiful face of Aileen Moore, and was deadly jealous of Dermot Darrell—had been heard to remark that he should think Darrell's coat could find its way alone from Athenry to Kilallen Farm, since it had been the journey so many times.

Yes, Dermot's clothes were—we will not deny it—a decided "caution" to an aspiring lover. His long waistcoat was of blue cloth patched in all directions by the industrious fingers of his mother and Aileen; his hat was a shapeless fels; his skirt could not be seen, for the long waistcoat was buttoned up and hid it. He cast his old hat on the clay floor at his feet, and asked Aileen gently for a cup of tay.

Dermot was a splendid specimen of the Irish peasantry: he stood six feet in his "stocking feet," and was broad-shouldered and stalwart, fair-complexioned and blue-eyed, with regular features and fair curling hair. His countenance was in general frank and kind, but trouble and a sense of wrong was gradually substituting another and sterner expression for the gentler one with which Nature had endowed him. The time might come when the stern young face would become savage.

"A cup of tay, Aileen acushla," said poor Dermot.

At that moment there entered the room a little half-naked boy of five years old, the eldest child of Mike Darrell.

"There's a banshee crying outside, and upstairs there's a ghost—in Aileen's room. I heard him cough."

"The child's daft with the faver entirely," said Aileen. "It's left him so weak. My darling, you must not leave your bed."

"I can't go back," said little Micky, beginning to cry, "there's a ghost in Aileen's room; I heard him cough, and my mother heaxd him too."

"Mary must be taken worse," said Aileen. "Wait till I get a candle. I must take her up her tay, and Micky, if you are good you shall stay down here snug by the fire in my chair. Wait till I wrap you in the old shawl," picking up a venerable plaid shawl which did general duty as a "wrap" when either Mrs. Darrell or Aileen were compelled to go suddenly out to the yard or outbuildings.

Aileen enveloped the little one in the shawl—

he was but a mite—and he lay coiled up on the old cushion of the very old armchair close to the fire. Then Aileen took tea, toast and candle and quitted the room.

"Begorra! and I may get my tay for myself," said poor Dermot.

But this was not necessary. Mrs. Darrell now went to the table and began to dispense hospitality to her unexpected guests. We said that they were all talking at once. When two or three of the most noisy had partaken of some tea served in the little black earthenware mugs which were the "tea service" of the Darrell family, they began to be quiet.

Michael, the eldest son of the house of Darrell, was the most silent person of the whole party. He sat apart with his dark face hidden in his hands; his mug of tea stood untouched on the dresser by his side, near which the old clock was ticking away with loud and solemn tick. The loudest speaker was a man called Cornelius Kelly, or Corney by his intimates.

He was a haggard, fierce-eyed man of forty or thereabouts; he had thin, reddish hair, and very prominent pale blue eyes. When he was excited they seemed ready to start out of his head. His garments were poor and sorry, as were the garments of nearly all those present, but there was a power and a pathos in the man's face, voice and accent.

The men, half tipsy with bad whisky, sipped black tea in the widow Darrell's house, smoked their pipes, and listened to the wild, fantastic harangues of Kelly far more reverently than they ever listened to the admonitions of the parish priest, Father Byrne.

"We are all suffering; every one of us are suffering, cold and hunger and heartache," said Corney, "and there seems no end of our sufferings on this side the grave, my brave lads, unless—unless we aise all of us. No laggards lingering in the rear, no cowards afraid to strike. We must arise as one man if we mean to wrest the lands from the oppressors. How is that to be done? We must assemble in thousands and ten of thousands on the hills and in the valleys of our poor unhappy land, and we must march in a throng from one sea to the other, and we must pass through the towns and hamlets and call up the men from every home-stead to join our ranks. We must have arms."

He paused.

"They refuse to sell us arms," he went on, presently, "but we have friends beyond the seas who will send them—nay, who have sent them to us. The spirit of the oppressed all over the earth is rousing itself from the sleep of centuries. Let not us be behindhand—we, who are more cruelly down-trodden than them all. I am only a poor man, and ignorant, for the most part, of book learning, but I read the papers; I know how scornfully the Press speaks of us and of our wrongs, but none of those English know half what we endure."

"Nine years ago this bitter December, my lads, my wife Mary died in my arms. I loved her more, far more than my life. We had been wed twelve months and a day, and my infant son lay asleep by her side. I then rented Balboggan Farm close by here. I had toiled night and day in those bare fields, but the land would not yield her increase, and I owed fifty pounds of arrears of rent. Balboggan is one of my Lord Clondell's farms, as you all know. My lord was spending Christmas here then, as he intends to spend it now at Athlone Castle."

"His agent was laid up with rheumatism; my lord was his own agent that winter, and a right hard one he was. He sent a couple of bailiffs to serve me with a notice of eviction, giving me one month to raise the money. I could not raise it. I sold my silver watch and a dozen pigs for twenty pounds, and sent him that, and begged for more time as my wife was near her confinement. He took the money, but sent word that if the rest was not paid by the time we must go.

"Oh, the villain of that—the villain of that. Think of it, boys, taking the money which would have bought us blankets and food for months, and yet driving us out

into the cold. What does the Earl of Clondell deserve?"

A groan—a howl rather filled the clay-floored kitchen of Kilallen, and rose in hideous chorus to the raftered roof.

"Death!" said many voices.

Nancy Darrell, sitting in the chimney corner with her apron thrown over her head, broke into a wild tempest of sobs and cried "Amen," in a wild screaming voice:

"Ay," said Corney, with a grim smile—"death, nothing less! I have condemned him years ago, and I have waited as the wolf waits for his prey on the snowy Siberian steppes. The day came: Mary's child was four days old; the bailiffs, and half-a-dozen rough men arrived and began to put the cruel orders of the villainous lord into execution. I went down to them and said, 'My wife would die if we had to take her away; there was no neighbour's house within a mile.' You all know what a lonesome, wild place Balboggan is.

"Well, they laughed at my story and called it a smoke-up, and into the house they came and began to throw the things out of the windows. So seeing that soon their wicked hands would be laid on my wife and my babe, I went upstairs and wrapped her in blankets and took her down to the outhouse. She fainted when I laid her on the straw, and before I could get away to harness the old horse into the market cart, as I had meant to do, she died in a fit in my arms. Her babe followed her the next day."

"Friends, you know what happened to me then? Folks said I went raving mad when I came out of a brain fever that struck me down, and I was shut up in an asylum for a year. When I came out again I was a man shattered in body but not in mind. No, I seemed to see things in a clearer light than I had ever seen them in before. I had always been used to read and think rather more than those around me, and I took to reading and thinking more than ever since then. As I am quick with my pen I have gone about the country as a clerk to Patrick Lavery the auctioneer, and in that capacity I have seen much life. My pay has hardly sufficed to keep body and soul together, but I have learned more and more of the oppressors and the oppressed. Ah, my countrymen, my Mary is not the only wife who has died of cold through being turned out by a landlord's warrant."

"And there will be another in this house within the month," cried Mrs. Darrell, springing to her feet and throwing out her hands before her. "Michael, lad, your poor wife and your babes are only now recovering from fever, and this day month we are all to clear out of this house where you were born, and your father before you. We were served with a notice of eviction this day by that varmint Callender, bad cess to him!"

A chorus of groans and hisses met this announcement of Nancy Darrell's. Michael arose. He lifted his hand, hard and heavy with toil, as a sledge hammer, and he brought it down savagely upon the dresser.

"He must die," said Michael, "the death of a dog, he and his sons. I heard myself that the second of them was at Athenry to-night, having arrived by the train, and finding no car to convey him home, had set out to walk over the hills to Athlone Castle. Now, boys, if we can find him we must lodge a bullet in his head."

A horrible groan of assent followed this ruthless proposal. Michael stood up and threw out his brawny arms.

"We have none to take pity on us and remove these oppressors from our path. We must, therefore, be judges, juries, and executioners of these wretches ourselves. They have murdered our wives and our little ones. It is, therefore, time that they died the death. Boys, are ye all of one mind? What is the sentence on this man and his two sons?"

"Death! Death!" shrieked the assembled men. "Death to the males of the house of Athlone!"

At that moment the door opened and Aileen

entered, looking beautiful as the morning star, pale, but calm, and with a smile on her lovely lips. Aileen had listened at the door and had heard every word that the raging men had spoken.

"If they find him," she said to her heart, "his blood will stain our hearth-stone to-night."

CHAPTER IV.

One kiss, dear maid,
Before we part, one seal
On those pure lips of thine,
I'll keep thy memory in my heart—
Will thou not cherish mine?

"Aileen, and how is Mary entirely?" asked the widow Darrell of Aileen.

"She is better." She has drank her tay; and she could sleep if these jintlemen were less noisy down here," said Aileen, with a purposely saucy smile.

"Ah, thin, and it's Aileen is growing too proud for her old friends," said Cornelius Kelly, looking sorrowfully at beautiful Aileen. "It's myself that has carried you in my arms when you were a wee thing, Ally, and you were not proud then."

"I am not proud now, Corney Kelly," Aileen answered with another radiant smile. "But my poor sister, as I call Mary, can't sleep with so much noise and loud talking; her head is weak yet."

As the beautiful girl spoke she sought with all her might to meet the eyes of her adopted mother, but Mrs. Darrell looked into the fire and turned her head away.

"She is hesitating whether or no to tell the boys who is hiding here to-night," said Aileen to herself. The sorrow has fairly crazed her and turned her heart to gall. If they kill him I will flee away, and not a Darrell shall ever see my face more as long as I live."

Aileen then carried the now sleeping child out of the room and put him to bed.

Edward Athlone stood shivering in a little chamber where the walls on two sides were of deal, and where the window in the roof admitted a ray of wintry moonlight, which ran along the bare floor, and quivered there like a stream of fairy water. The snow had ceased, and everything was freezing hard under the cold rays of that winter moon.

Edward Athlone felt that he was likewise beginning to freeze. Below he heard the sound of fierce, agonised, impassioned voices. First one, then another. He quite understood what kind of creed those men were enforcing, what manner of sermon they were preaching, and the text of it.

Blood for blood! Sorrow for sorrow! Death for death! The wild justice called Revenge was all they sought just now, for they saw no lawful means of improving their condition save the perilous, uncertain chances of emigration. All they sought then was the death of their tyrants.

"My father is a cruel man," said Edward to himself. "He is cruel to his own flesh. How, then, can these people expect that he will be kind to them? Would to Heaven I could help them. What a face of beauty that girl has. I must paint her one day. She must come up to the castle. Ah, how cold it is. I wish I was there now, and by the side of a fire."

At that moment Athlone heard the sound of a girl's light footsteps on the creaking stairs. It passed the door, and then entered an adjoining garret. There was only the thin panel between the two rooms, and the earl's son heard the voice of Aileen say distinctly:

"Ask no questions, mavourneen, for the love of the saints. Only believe me, there's a man in the house whom they think is bad but he is good. They would kill him if they found him. I am going to walk away with him to Clondell. Promise me to keep watch, and oh, Mary, try, though your poor head is bad, to remember all I say to you, and to tell them if they ask of me that I am taken with a violent pain in my side from the cold. That bed is the only place

where I can get warm; that I begged them not to disturb me; that I came to you to mix peppermint in this hot water, not liking to make a fuss downstairs, and don't let Mike or Dermot be at my door to disturb me. Listen, aushla. They were all wild to follow this young gentleman across the common to Clondell, for they heard he had started to walk there from Athlone, but I was mighty hospitable asking them to stay and not spend their blitter night in the open air, and at last they agreed; if they had once started I don't see how the gentleman could escape. They would watch the road between this and Clondell and find out in the village that he had not arrived, and they would not leave the village until he did arrive if it was all to-morrow they waited for him, and in that time they would be sure Dermot and Michael to find that he was hiding up here. He has a slight cough now. Do you hear him? He must get away while they are talking and smoking downstairs. Do you mind me, Mary?"

"Aye, I mind you, my colleen," answered the feeble voice of Michael's wife. "I mind you, and I'll help all I can, but how, in the world, will you stand the cold this time of night; it's freezing hard."

"And I," said Aileen, "am that excited that I am as warm as if it were a July day with the sun's rays pouring down on the hay fields, and the mountains shimmering against the blue Heaven. Feel my hand. I must just put on my little shawl that I always wear, and thou wilt lend me thy cloak, thy red cloak, aushla; but he must wear the long market cloak of the mother, and wrap his head in her red hood that she wears to church. He must just enter the village disguised like an ould market dame, and carry a basket on his arm.

"And why so?" asked Mary.

"Because I have been listening to the boys downstairs, and they say there's a gang of them at Clondell village all looking out for the arrival of this younger son, whom they hate, as a fine gentleman who lives a life of ease and pleasure in London, and only comes here at Christmas time to feast and make merry in the grand Castle, while the poor are dying outside its gates, and they say he shall only be carried in a corpse. Is it not cruel, and they have not seen him since he was a child of fourteen years?"

"And they call themselves men," cried Mary. "Why, their troubles have made them into fiends."

"I can't think or talk of it more now," said Aileen. "It is time to act."

Two minutes later there came a slight rap on the door of the room where Athlone was concealing himself, and the sweet voice of Aileen whispered:

"Unlock at once. Edward, obey."

Aileen stood before him in a red cloak, which reached to her heels. On her head was a hood of the same tint. She held another and much larger cloak in her hands. Edward Athlone hated the thought of putting on the disguise, and fleeing from the dwelling of these savage peasants like a thief. Had he acted up to his instincts he would have liked to rush down among those ruffians and tell them to do their worst, but the lovely face of Aileen was a most wonderful and entrancing temptation. The idea of the two miles' walk in her company was peculiarly piquant and delightful to him. There was a deep tinge of romance too about the whole proceeding which fired his poetic fancy.

How exquisite Aileen looked, those long lashes resting on her cheeks, while her eyes were cast down. The pure and perfect contour of the oval face struck the artistic young aristocrat as something wonderful in its beauty.

"She is like some marble Sylphide of old Greece," said Edward to himself. "She is above the average, far above the average of a merely pretty Irish country girl. I must know more of her."

The door of the poor room stood ajar. Aileen stood in the narrow passage, the candle in its old iron candlestick Aileen had set upon the shelf in her room which contained the few books she possessed in the world, while Athlone was

attiring himself in Mrs. Darrell's enormous red cloak.

He could not help taking stock of the poor chamber, which was the sanctuary of this most beautiful of beautiful maidens. It was a tiny room, the ceiling was very low, the walls were whitewashed, the bed was an iron stretcher with a palliasse and single mattress, a couple of old blankets, and coarse, though snow-white sheets. The floor was bare, but scrubbed white as milk. There was a looking-glass about the size of a dinner plate suspended by a nail and a brass ring against the whitewashed wall. There was a little table, on which stood the white jug and basin, and a towel hung from a nail also. There was a deal box, which contained the clothes of Aileen, but besides all this, there were prayers and texts of scripture and some coloured prints of saints and angels against the walls.

"And this homely, cleanly, miserable room seems to be like the sanctuary of some saint," said Athlone to himself. "What an air of peace, purity, and refinement pervades the whole. Yet, what a shame to let this sweet rose flourish in such a bleak wilderness."

And then the young man sighed and thought of Lady Emily Fairleigh, his ladylove, and contrasted the cynical mocking expression of that enchantress with the almost divine sweetness of Aileen's face.

"If she were a lady—anybody," said he, and then he added: "Most likely if she were she would become spoilt."

Then his absurd disguise was complete. He strode forward and Aileen signed to him to remove his boots and carry them in his hand. She herself took off her thick country shoes; she locked the door of her room, put the key in her pocket, and stole down the stairs and into the stone passage, followed by Edward Athlone. The entrance door was wide open, and Athlone saw the bright moon shining on the snow-covered mountains and the white roofs of the outbuildings.

At the threshold the pair put on their shoes and then hastened across the yard, afraid to look at the little window of the kitchen where the old chintz curtain was pinned across and the red firelight gleamed on the glass panes. In five minutes more the young man and the maiden were hurrying across the common which led to the tiny village of Clondell and the Castle of Athlone.

It was only the distance of a mile, and now that the snow was down and the atmosphere bright and clear, there was no difficulty in finding ones way across the common, but the wind howled like a pack of wolves, and the snow in many places was deep.

Edward Athlone had never worn a disguise so grotesque since he had joined in a mask at school, but he thought so much of Aileen, so little of himself. This eccentric young gentleman was in many things so little of an egotist, and had such a small share of man's vanity, that he forgot that he was masquerading in the guise of an old Irish market woman in a red cloak which reached nearly to his ankles. He had turned up his trousers so that his boots and stockings would not in that light have seemed incongruous.

Nancy Darrell was a very tall woman, and the red cloak reached to her heels. There was not a single human being in sight. Neither of the young people had as yet spoken, but Athlone was the first to break the silence:

"I am more delighted to have you for a companion than I can express," said the young gentleman, courteously, "but I am annoyed at your turning out in the cold. I know my way to Athlone Castle, and is it quite necessary that I should wear this cloak? It is, excuse me, confoundedly uncomfortable."

"I could laugh at the idea, sir, another time," said Aileen, "but not now. We shall meet some people near or at Clondell who will speak to us. I can answer them in the accent that they know. You could not speak like our Galway farmers, not to save your life. I must see you safe within the doors of Athlone Castle before I leave you, Mr. Athlone."

"My dear girl," said Edward, "you shall not

leave then; you shall come into the castle and I will present you to my friends as the preserver of my life!"

"Sir," said Aileen, "that would simply ruin me."

"In what way?" asked Edward, quickly.

"The people who would have taken your life were my own friends. If I were once a witness against them I should die—die of grief and shame. I think honestly, sir, that I have so far saved your life, and may Heaven grant that I may see you safely into Athlone Castle to-night, but don't ask me to enter it."

"And do you suppose that I am such a cowardly wretch as to allow a young girl to walk alone over this moorland?"

"Oh, sir," Aileen answered, "Aileen Moore could walk this country round for fifteen miles in the dead of the night, and neither man nor woman would molest her. I am the child of these bleak hills and poor villages and little straggling mountain towns. I am one with these poor oppressed, down-trodden people. Most of them would risk their own lives to serve me."

"Who would not with a man's heart in his breast, most beautiful Aileen?" said the young man, passionately.

Aileen could not feel as vexed at this complimentary strain as she wished to feel. Do what she would, reason with herself as she would, the voice of this son of the Athlones sounded like sweetest music in her ears. Already he was a hero in her eyes, and this bleak walk over the bitter cold moorland was to her like straying through some sunnier land, some enchanted country that she had read of in fairy lore.

Aileen was always, by the young men of her own class, reckoned as rather proud and cold, and she had been well satisfied in her own heart to be so reckoned. Now how was it? Was she giving away her heart unasked for to this sweet-voiced, stalwart son of the nobility—he who belonged to the class which she had always been taught to fear and dislike?

"I shall never see him again. I must never see him again," said Aileen to herself.

At that instant the young people stepped as it were suddenly into the village of Clondell. It was a long, steep street of most heterogeneous aspect. There were some large houses lying back in gardens. The doctor's house, the lawyer's house, the house of the priest, Father Byrne. Then there were a few shops, one or two respectable, others of a poor, mean aspect, then came rows of miserable thatched, whitewashed hovels. Before them rose the high iron gates which led into a sequestered alley of Athlone Park.

"Now I shall be at home in ten minutes, Aileen," said Edward. "You must come up to the house with me and have some supper, and then I will send you away in a close carriage."

"And what would the boys at home say to me, Mr. Athlone? What can I say for myself? You forget that they are never to know I have been here."

They were close to the gates now. Suddenly two heads, rough, savage male heads, looked over the low stone wall that shut off some potatoe fields from the road. They were watching, then, these men for the return of the young Athlone, who had been away from old Ireland for ten or more years. Now was the moment of peril. Aileen felt sure that each of those men were armed with a revolver.

(To be Continued.)

COMMON SENSE IN DRIVING.

Most men over-drive. They attempt too much, and in so doing distract or hamper the horse. Now and then you find a horse with such a vicious gait that his speed is got from him by the most artificial processes, but such horses are fortunately rare, and hence the style of management required cannot become general. The

true way is to let the horse drive himself—the driver doing but little but directing him, and giving him that confidence which a horse alone gets in himself when he feels that a guide and a friend is at the back of him.

The most vicious and inexcusable style of driving is that which so many drivers adopt, viz., wrapping the reins around either hand, and pulling the horse backward with all their might and main, so that the horse, in point of fact, pulls the weight back of him with his mouth, and not with his breast and shoulders. This they do under the impression that such a dead pull is needed to "steady" the horse. This method of driving we regard as radically and superlatively wrong. It would tax the ingenuity of a hundred fools to invent a worse one.

The fact is, with rare exceptions, there should never be any pull upon the horse at all. A steady pressure is allowable, probably advisable, but anything beyond this has no justification in nature or reason; for nature suggests the utmost possible freedom of action of head, body and limbs, in order that the animal may attain the highest rate of speed; and reason certainly forbids the supposition that by the bit, and not the breast-collar, the horse is to draw the weight attached to it. In speeding our horses we very seldom grasp the reins with both hands when the road is straight and free from obstructions. The reins are rarely steadily taut, but held in easy pliancy, and by this motion communicate courage and confidence to him. We find that by this method our horses break less and go faster than when driven by men who put the old-fashioned steady pull upon them.—R. H.

THE WIND THAT BRINGS MY SAILOR HOME.

Oh, tell me not of distant climes,

Of breezes soft as maidens sighs,

Where groves of oranges and limes

Bloom far away 'neath bluer skies;

Of all the winds that ever blow

On shore or on the ocean's track,

Where fierce waves roll or gently flow,

Give me the one that brings him back—

The fairest wind's the wind to me,

That brings my sailor home from sea.

Say not in other lands more fair

That sailors are a fickle crew;

Their deeds will prove without compare

Their hearts are as the compass

true,

So never say a maiden's love

Is wasted on an honest tar.

May sweet stars shine from vaults

above,

And guide him home from climes

afar.

The dearest wind's the wind to me

That brings my sailor home from sea.

O. P.

SCIENCE.

PRESERVATIVE OF THE DEAD.

A new process has been patented in Germany for the preservation of the dead. The liquid used is prepared as follows:—In 3,000 grammes of boiling water are dissolved 100 grammes of alum, 25 grammes of cooking salt, 12 grammes of saltpetre, 60 grammes of potash, and 10 grammes of arsenic acid. When cool it is filtered. To 10 litres of this liquid 4 litres of glycerine and 1 litre of methylic alcohol are added. The process of embalming is by saturating and impregnating the bodies with it. From 1½ to 5 litres of the liquid are used for a body.

A BAN ON INFLAMMABLE GOODS.—In consequence of recent disclosures the directors of the

North German Lloyd's Steamship Company have decided to refuse transportation on their vessels to the class of heavy French silks which are so weighted with chemicals and oils as to cause danger of spontaneous combustion.

A COAT of gum copal varnish applied to the soles of boots and shoes, and repeated as it dries until the pores are filled and the surface shines like polished mahogany, will make the sole waterproof, and it lasts three times longer.

THE St. Gothard tunnel makes steady progress, no less than 3,000 workmen being engaged upon it. Nearly 10 tons of dynamite are used per month.

NEW MILITARY PROJECTILE.—Experiments have recently been carried on at Grenoble to test the efficacy of a new apparatus, made by Mr. Lamarré. The invention consists of balls to be projected by guns of a fortress for the purpose of throwing a strong light on the enemy's positions during the night; the principal object being to prevent the digging of trenches or the performance of other military operations. Shortly after leaving the cannon, the Lamarré fire ball discharges a light sufficiently bright, and lasts long enough, to enable guns to be pointed at the works. The projectile is, moreover, provided with a grenade, which explodes after a certain time, and is designed to keep the enemy's troops away and prevent them from putting out the unwelcome light.

HOW CARLYLE SERVED A VISITOR.

THOMAS CARLYLE's powers of checking undue forwardness are the theme of numerous anecdotes, the most characteristic of which is the following, which is literally true:

A presuming fellow, who had been brought to dine with him by a common friend, began to speak slightly of his great hero, Burns, calling him "a much overrated man," etc. Carlyle made no comment, which emboldened the critic to continue in the same strain till dinner ended. When they rose to go to the drawing-room, the host broke his grim silence at last:

"Is that your hat and stick in the corner, sir?"

"Yes."

"Then you had better take them and be gone at once."

The crestfallen visitor obeyed, and his introducer was about to follow, when "true Thomas" stopped him, saying that "he had done no wrong."

This recalls the story of a worthy Quaker who attempted to disarm a well known "better tongue" by inviting him to dinner; but the back-biter while enjoying the good cheer, continued his abuse unabated. The man of peace, after bearing it for a time, suddenly sprang upon his rivaler, saying:

"Friend, I have given thee a meat-offering and a drink-offering; and now," he added, lifting him through the open window into the street "I will give thee a heave-offering."

An English undergraduate at examination, on being told to repeat the parable of the Good Samaritan, thus did it: "A certain man journeyed from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves." Then he stopped. "Go on, sir," said the examiner. "And—" "And what? Go on, sir." "And the thieves sprang up and choked him!" triumphantly ended the youth.

THE Gainsborough hat having had its day and nearly ceased to be, now comes the Reynolds' coat, which is copied from Reynolds's portrait of Lady Spencer. It is made almost precisely like a Breton coat with plush lapels opening over a waistcoat of grey and black pekin velvet. The material is damask, but the pockets are of plush and the whole garment is elegant.



[IN THE SICK ROOM.]

TWICE REJECTED; OR, THE NAMELESS ONE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"The Baronet's Son," "Who Did It?" &c., &c.

CHAPTER XV.

Soon, soon will these dark, dreary days have gone by,
And our hearts be lit up with a beam from the sky.
Oh, let not our spirits, embittered with pain,
Be dead to the sunshine that comes to us then.

The inquest was opened on the following day. Leila's turn came very early in the melancholy list of witnesses as to the dead. She had but little to say, but that little was pregnant with pain and humiliation.

"You are Madame de Cenci's companion, I understand, and was travelling with her? Have you been with her long? Can you identify her property, and give the necessary information as to her relatives and heirs?" were some of the questions put and answered, save in the last instance, with brief affirmatives.

"I cannot identify her property. That was in the possession of her maid, who is, unhappily, among the killed," she said, with a slight shiver.

"I believe there was a dressing-case found, with jewels of some value, where the accident took place. Can you give any description or account of the contents?" asked the coroner, suspiciously.

"I know the dressing-case. It was of ebony, inlaid with silver," she replied; "but I do not know the jewels. The comtesse seldom wore them since I was with her."

"You are perhaps able to tell us who are her

heirs and relatives?" resumed the coroner, who, as sometimes happens, was rather more inclined to overstep than keep within the bounds of his duty.

Leila hesitated, and coloured at the question. "I believe there are some in England whom the comtesse was striving to identify," she said, coldly, "but I am not able to say what is the truth. I can give you the name of her lawyer in London, if you wish," she impatiently went on, as she saw the disapproving doubt on the magistrate's countenance.

"Thank you. That will probably be necessary," said Mr. Warren, shortly. "It is altogether a disagreeable case, since it is pretty well ascertained that the deceased lady had property of considerable value in the train, and it is important that it should be identified and accounted for to her heirs. It will therefore be advisable that you should hold yourself in readiness to answer any inquiries. You may leave the witness-box with this intimation, Miss Lorraine, and be so good as to remain in this immediate neighbourhood till all these doubts are cleared up, and the lawful heirs satisfactorily placed in charge of her effects."

Leila bowed with proud grace and retired from the court with a new sense of disquiet. Surely it was impossible she could be suspected as a thief? And yet the coroner's words had well nigh tended to such a conclusion. His looks, his insinuations, were all tending to the miserable idea, and the girl set herself to face the possible contingency, and with a bitter and morbid despair, the fate that might be in store for her.

"It will be a worthy conclusion," she thought, "of the strange romance of my life."

Why should she dread it? What was there to allure her in the world? Who was there to be shamed or disgraced by her degradation? Only herself, the rejected and the nameless one, would suffer where she to be placed in a felon's dock. It was a bitter consolation, but it had at least the bracing effect of such bitters on her spirit.

"Let it come. I will be strong," she thought. Thus some hours passed in a dreary forgetfulness, or rather absorption in the past than the future, when her door opened, and the servant who waited on her appeared with a countenance that spoke some perplexity.

"If you please, miss, there are two gentlemen want to see you, and they will not give their names, but they say their business is urgent. Shall I bring them in?"

Leila hesitated. Then her reflections for the past hour came to her aid.

"Yes, bring them in. It matters not," she said, calmly.

There was a brief delay. The new-comers were either hesitating or else they had some fancy to refresh themselves in the genial atmosphere of the coffee-room. At last she heard steps slowly and heavily ascending the stairs. Her heart beat violently. Was it Geoffrey Sabine? Her quick pulses might have told her that such an agitation betokened some unusual interest in the identity of the new-comer; but it so it was soon set at rest. Two persons instead of one entered the apartment—young Hugo Cardwell and the sharp-shooting lawyer, Mr. Lewis.

* * * * *

A day of such excitement might well be the forerunner of a troubled night. Leila had not yet endured the further test of an interview with Madame de Cenci's declared heir, nor the legal adviser who acted as his guardian; but the very fact of their presence recalled the remarkable scene at Mrs. Somers' cottage, and the surprise that the woman had involuntarily expressed when Leila accompanied her patroness to the humble habitation.

A drowning man catches at a straw. A mind all tossed and perplexed by doubt and uncertainty is equally inclined to rest on the slightest clue which can guide through the labyrinth; and thus was it that Leila Lorraine dwelt with perhaps weak clinging to a fragile thread on the evident and agitated surprise that Mrs.

Somers had betrayed on her entrance to the cottage, and indulged in a baseless, wondering vein as to the chances that the old woman regarded her as one she had once known.

"It is an absurdity," she exclaimed, impatiently, to herself.

For even had her infancy been known to the dame in question there was much impossibility in any such recognition after so many years. Leila had reason on her side. No infant can foreshadow its future aspect and condition; but should there be a knowledge of its type and its race it might still be a matter of speculation as to the form and features thus descending from generation to generation.

But all this was too abstruse and mature for the young and innocent girl, and therefore, with an impatient and self-reproachful shake of her long tresses on her throat and shoulders, she resigned herself to the exhaustion that overpowered her and sank into a deep but not heavy sleep. Heavy it certainly was not, for it was broken by sounds too faint for any but a light slumberer to have been at all disturbed by the noise.

It was a nervous—repeated, sad, low, but unmistakable moan that came on the young sleeper's ear. The painful plaint was repeated after she was in full waking sense of what was passing around. Low and regular, as if well nigh unconscious in its vent, it broke the deep silence of the night, when all were doubtless too steeped in refreshing sleep to note the mournful wail.

Leila could not rest while the dove-like sadness of the appealing plaint continued to proceed from the neighbourhood of her chamber. It was no business of hers. Her own course was mainly directed to finding a firm resting-place of safety for herself, and it was worse than folly to meddle in the wants and woes of others. But that is scarcely the philosophy of eighteen, and assuredly not of one quick to feel and sympathise as the Nameless One.

She quickly dressed herself in a wrapping gown, over which her lovely hair meandered like a glittering shower, and then opened the door and listened in silence with a beating heart. Again it came. It was more touching than ever in its appeal for help. Whether in sleep or waking—whether from man or animal—Leila could not but obey its call. She left her room, and with a lamp in her hand she stole along the corridor of the hotel, and once again listened as she turned the angle to get to another part of the building.

Then it became more distinct, and in a few seconds she had reached the room from whence it came. The door was ajar, which accounted for the sounds being more easily distinguished, and without pausing to consider Leila pushed it open. It was a sick room; there was no doubt of it from the burning lamp, the blazing fire, and the whole entourage of illness.

The girl hastened to the bedside to test the reality of the suffering which that addended sound indicated, and drew back the bed curtains. She started back painfully. At a glance she took in the whole scene. It was the crippled heir of Loraine who lay there faint and moaning, and the crimson stains on the bed-clothes betrayed but too vividly the cause. The wound must have opened afresh, and once more the sufferer was losing his very life blood.

No one was there. A large, empty chair stood by the hearth, and a bottle and glass on the table, which might explain the mystery. The man had partaken too freely of the tempting drink, and the effect had been so soporific as to induce a resource to the couch in the adjoining room, from which hard and regular snoring mingled strangely with the faint moan of the patient.

Leila took in the scene at a glance. There was not a moment to be lost. Luckily she knew where to look for the wound which she herself had been the first to bandage, and partly removing the shirt, she inspected the wound, from which the bandage had slipped. She did not wait to waken the stupefied man, and thus lose precious time in the recalling him to life and consciousness.

Rapidly unwrapping the bandage already used for the purpose, she bathed the wound and all surrounding with water, and then, pressing the parts gently together, she once more staunched the welling stream, and firmly but gently bound up the sore, and then, looking around for stimulants and restoratives, she went on to apply them to the exhausted frame. It was successful. A little essence, a few drops of brandy, and then Hugh opened his eyes and looked around with a far greater air of recognition than she could have expected.

"Ah, you are there, my good angel, my guardian genius," he said, softly, looking at her with the grateful confidence of a child. "It is as I would wish, to die with your sweet face in my sight as a foretaste of the angels."

"Hush! hush! You are not going to die," she said, with a reassuring cheerfulness in her tone. "The bandage slipped from your wound, that was all, and that made you faint. Go to sleep quietly, and you will wake up all right again."

"Then you will not leave me—you will let me hold your hand?" he said, feebly. "I shall feel safe if I know you are there."

How could she refuse? Life and death were at stake, and she could never pardon herself if by some prudish measure she forfeited the life that might be as precious to others as to himself; so she quietly and innocently left the small fingers in his, and sat motionless and calm till he sank to sleep. Then her own exhausted strength gave way, and she sank back on the cushions of the padded chair, and unconsciously became lost in the blessed oblivion of Nature's balmy restorer. She was only awakened by a step of no very gentle character and a voice that had a metallic sharpness in its acrid entreaty.

"Miss Loraine, what does this extraordinary proceeding mean? I am perfectly astonished to find you here, and in such a position."

It was Clara Vere, the stately cousin of the cripple. For the moment Leila literally stared in surprise at the scene around, which, in fact, awakening from sleep, she did not comprehend. Then the truth dawned on her, and she hastily drew her hand from Hugh's and rose from her seat, confronting the cold and disapproving visitor to the room.

"Mr. Loraine was moaning. I was awakened, I suppose, by the sound, and when I came in the nurse had gone to rest, and his arm was bleeding. I bound it up, and he asked me to stay with him till morning, when someone else would be awake. That is all," she said, quietly, and with no flush or trace of consciousness on her cheeks.

In truth she felt none. How could she associate aught but pity and charitable tending where so sad and crippled an invalid was concerned? But Miss Vere was not appeased.

"It is highly improper, and anyone who had a spark of decorum in them would have called those who had a right to be here," she returned, angrily; "it was most forward and indecorous. I suppose you expected to get in with Mr. Loraine and myself by such pushing ways, but you will find yourself mistaken. You had better leave the room directly, and you certainly have forfeited all the interest I was good enough to promise you," she added, in a tone choking with passion.

Leila in silence turned to obey, but Hugh, roused fully from his long slumber by the acrid bitterness of his cousin's tones, now interfered.

"Clara, you are unjust—harsh," he said, in accents of wonderful strength for his condition. "This is the second time Miss Loraine has saved my life, and I owe her a debt that cannot be repaid."

"That is absurd, Hugh," she returned, but not so angry as to be utterly blinded to the effect of her demeanour upon her lover. "As if she could not have called someone more skilful and certainly more proper than herself to perform such an office; and then to remain the rest of the night, too. It is perfectly sickening," she went on, scornfully.

Leila had disappeared during the colloquy, glad to escape the reproach and the strife. But

Hugh was not so easily vanquished by the irate lady.

"Clara, for my sake, if not for womanliness, be silent," he said. "Do not let me think you had rather I had died than be saved by this poor, brave, innocent girl. I insist on her exemption from such a cruel return for her noble kindness till I can find means of repaying in some degree the debt."

Miss Vere was silenced, but not soothed. Her bitter jealousy was roused to the very utmost pitch, and she secretly determined to remove the object of her fears as soon as possible from her path.

"Oh, Hugh, you know better than that," she said. "Only I do not care about your being indebted to another for what I alone would wish to have done for you; and as to this girl, I am afraid she is not at all what you imagine. She is a little adventurous, I fancy, who is driven to straits for want of a character. But you must not agitate yourself by talking. Try and sleep again. I will not leave you, I assure you, dear Hugh."

The cripple strove to sleep, but either the exhaustion had subsided or the presence of his cousin was not so soporific as that of the sweet, soft Leila, for he closed his eyes, but in vain. His thoughts were busy, too busy for repose. He pictured to himself life with that soft, musical voice ever in his ears, that lovely young face ever before his eyes, and that gentle, unobtrusive tending at his command. It was a tantalising view, and an impossible one, even had he not been bound to his cousin, but it was scarcely favourable to his peace of mind or the influence of Clara Vere over him.

Meanwhile Leila hastened back to her room, and with a slight blush at her dress, hastily proceeded to complete her toilette. Scarcely had it been accomplished when the maid who waited on her came to tell her that she was wanted in the sitting-room, as the gentlemen who had come the night before were talking with someone, and wished to speak with her about something.

"And you've not had your breakfast, miss?" added the chambermaid. "It's too bad of them, and I told them so, but they wouldn't wait, anyhow."

Leila hastily descended.

"What fresh trouble awaits me now?" she thought, bitterly.

She entered the sitting-room, where Mr. Lewis, the Padstow solicitor, Hugo Cardwell, and a strange gentleman were seated in impatient expectation. Hugo started up and eagerly came forward to meet her with extended hand, which she only noticed by a bow as she advanced into the room.

"You sent for me?" she said, quietly, to Mr. Lewis. "I suppose to ask about the death of Madame de Cenci?"

"Yes, certainly—at least, partly so—and other matters," he said, placing a chair for her near his own. "You see, Miss Loraine, you are a witness to the will of the late comtesse, and also, you can testify to her complete recognition of this young gentleman as her nephew, and, as such, we shall need your services, and I shall be happy to stand your friend in the rather peculiar circumstances in which I understand you are placed."

Leila looked doubtfully at the lawyer.

"Of course my name is attached to the will, and I shall not deny my own signature, but that is all I shall say about it," she said.

"But you are aware how entirely the late comtesse was convinced of the identity of this young fellow?" asked the lawyer, sharply.

"I had rather decline giving any opinion on that point," returned Leila, firmly.

"You mean to say that you doubt it?" exclaimed Mr. Lewis, angrily.

"I do not give any opinion," she repeated. "Madame de Cenci was in very delicate health. She had a great desire to find her nephew, and therefore would naturally welcome any proof that was given her. I knew nothing more than what I heard, and I decline to interfere in the matter," she added, with a dignity of which

her slight young form seemed hardly capable of.

She could hardly account even to herself for the distrust she felt of that handsome but sinister-looking youth and his pretensions, nor the resolve she made not in the slightest degree to help him in establishing them.

"If Mr. Sabine could have come," she thought, "he would probably have detected some hollowness in the evidence that would have satisfied the unfortunate comtesse."

"I would advise you to be a little more wary in your insinuations, Miss Loraine," resumed the lawyer. "There are some questions raised already as to your own character and conduct in regard to Madame de Cenci's property entrusted to your charge, and as I am sole legatee of the will, I have a great deal in my power as to preserving the charge."

Leila looked astonished. "Is she here? I thought she was too ill to move," she exclaimed, involuntarily.

"Ah, money can do a good deal," said Mr. Lewis, with a knowing laugh, "and there are such things as invalid carriages, Miss Loraine. Anyway, Mrs. Somers is here, and there'll be no harm in your seeing her, though I cannot see any good. Wait a moment, and I'll go and ask her what she wishes;" and he hastily left the room, whilst Hugo was still on guard had Leila been inclined to escape.

"It's a great pity you won't save any trouble about this, my dear girl," he said, approaching Leila with a disagreeable, fawning smile on his face. "Why can't you just make the promise and be done with it? You don't want to harm me, I am sure, and I would rather keep you a prisoner in some other way than this."

This with what he intended as an expression of winning tenderness, but which in truth was a hateful leer in the girl's estimation.

"I have decided," she said, icily. "I want no advice, thank you;" and she moved hastily away from his contact just as Mr. Lewis appeared in the doorway.

"Be as good as to follow me," he said, in a somewhat gentler tone than he had before used. "Mrs. Somers is in the next room."

He led the way to an apartment which was in reality a handsomely furnished bedchamber, with a large sofa by the hearth, on which a bedridden woman was lying. She was somewhat flushed and excited, but the whole aspect of her figure and her dress was more prosperous than Leila had seen in the cottage at Padstow. Evidently the "wealth" spoken of by the lawyer had already become a fact in her case.

"Sit down, young lady," she said, in a tone that had some kindness in it, though those marvellously keen eyes of hers were fixed on the girl with a searching glance that proved the resolute determination of her purpose. "You are surprised to see me here, I daresay, but where there is a necessity all must be risked. Now, tell me, what does this mean? Why don't you do as Mr. Lewis wishes? What object have you in meddling with the affairs of other people, Miss Loraine?"

Leila did not bethink before the almost commanding presence of the old woman, with her strange and weird look.

"I will speak truth and do justice if it is at all possible," she said, quietly, "that is all. I am most unfortunate that I have it in my power to take any part in the affairs of others."

Mrs. Somers was still gazing earnestly at her features and at every line of her figure and gesture.

"Tell me, my child," she said, as if in a dream, "tell me, how is it that you are alone in the world? You are young and gently nurtured, as is patent to one like me. Where are your parents? Where is your home?"

It might be that she was trying to discover something to work upon and to know how far to go in her dealings with the girl. Whether so or not, Leila was rather reserved in answering her questions.

"It matters not to you. I am a foundling, and I have my own living to get. That is all you need to know," she replied, firmly.

"You are wrong, child, quite wrong," returned the woman. "Be advised, and tell me the truth."

"Why?" said the girl, with unrestrained eagerness. "Why?"

"Because, unless you are aware of your parentage and your station, it is best for you to confide in those who may perhaps have some better ideas than yourself of the possible circumstances of your birth."

Leila looked at her eagerly. The bait had caught in, at least, a passing measure.

"If you do know, if you have any pity, tell me at once," she said. "Only think what it

to be left alone in the world, nameless and friendless, and without a single tie on the whole wide earth. You cannot harden your heart against me like that."

A half-pitying smile crossed the woman's lips.

"That is like the young, so impulsive," she said. "Tell me everything, my child. It can be no disgrace to you. Whoever was the culprit, it had nothing to do with an infant babe. Who brought you up, and under what circumstances? Come, tell me."

Still the girl hesitated. It was a momentous confidence to make to a stranger, and a stranger from whom she had some serious dread from other causes.

"It is enough surely to tell you that I was brought up in a nobleman's house, that it was on the death-bed of my supposed mother the truth became known, and that I have no more idea than yourself as to the way in which I was introduced in the family."

"And then, when the truth became known, what then?" asked Mrs. Somers, eagerly, though it was a violent and grave agitation that was swaying her frame.

"He turned me from his doors like an imposter," she said, choking.

"Base and cruel. Base and cruel," murmured the woman. "And how long was it since? How old are you, my child?"

"I am eighteen. So far I am certain of that. My birthday was always kept on the thirteenth of September. That is all I know, or else it was an imaginary date," she replied, in a tone of some bitterness.

Mrs. Somers thought gravely for a few moments, and then muttered the date in her own mind in a meaning tone.

"The thirteenth of September," came almost involuntarily from her lips. "That is strange; but, dear! dear! I am an old idiot to twist everything in one direction. Yes, I am an old idiot."

Then she turned to Leila and said:

"Child, you are foolish and wrong. I would be as silent as the grave on your matter if it did not bear on anything I happened to have met with in my long life. What would it matter to me whether those that sheltered you were dukes or dustmen, earls or peasants? Be advised, and give me some idea of what cannot possibly harm you, whatever the result."

Had the girl been ten years older she might have suspected something from this pressure. Why should one whose withered frame and mature mind had been so entirely interested and engrossed by the strange romance of her grandson concern herself with such passionate vehemence on the affairs of a young and unknown stranger? But she was alone and unprotected and helpless as in the infant days when she was committed to the care of her supposed parents.

"I cannot tell why you are so anxious to know," she said at last. "Do you give me your solemn promise that you will not let any other human being know the truth if it has nothing to do with what you seem to have in your mind?"

"Yes, I have no objection in the world to give that promise," said the old woman, with the ring of truth in her voice, "if it has nothing to do with me. I am quite content to let it go by and forget it unless it concerns me at all. But will you tell me? It certainly concerns yourself more than me to do so."

"Then I will—I will," returned the girl, after a slight struggle with herself. "It was the Earl and Countess Deloraine with whom I was brought up as their only child. The countess died from the effects of an accident, and revealed to her husband that I was not their child, but, so far as I can learn, she substituted me in case she had no child of her own. The earl was so transported by rage and disappointment, and, perhaps, grief for her loss, that he sent me from his home and utterly discarded me for ever from his sight. Now you know the truth as I have heard it myself. I can tell you no more, Mrs. Somers."

The old woman did not betray any surprise or emotion at the revelation. Whatever the

effect might have been, she certainly kept it carefully veiled and suppressed.

"Do you mean the Deloraines of Loraine Hall?" she asked.

"Yes; do you know them?" was the eager demand.

"I have heard the name. There are few of the nobility with whom I am not acquainted in some manner," returned the woman. "Where is the earl now?"

"I do not know. I heard a vague rumour that he was going abroad, but it is not probable that I shall hear more of him who I believed was my father."

"Did Lady Deloraine reveal your real name, or where she received you from?" inquired Mrs. Somers.

"No; I fancy the words were arrested by death, and it is almost impossible I shall ever discover it now. I have no clue, not even a mark or a single garment that could give me a faint notion as to my parentage. It is a pitiable condition."

"And you went to Madame de Cenci's immediately? Is it so? Had you a reference from the earl or anyone else?"

"No; the maid who waited on me was instrumental in getting me the situation. It was not many months ago. Now she is gone, and I have no reference, nor do I know where to obtain another place," she replied, sadly.

Mrs. Somers again seemed lost in thought.

"True," she said, "and what is more, you are under grave suspicion of a crime. It will be difficult to disprove it, young lady, and still more so to induce Mr. Lewis, as the executor of the late comtesse's will, to forego the right of inquiry into and punishing you for the theft that has been committed."

Leila did not quail so utterly as might have been expected at this renewed threat.

"I cannot believe it," she said, "or that you can countenance such injustice. Mrs. Somers, you are a woman—a mother. I have told you my tale at your especial request. Can you—have you the heart to allow such wanton cruelty?"

The tears were in her eyes as she spoke, but they might have been as much of indignation as sorrow or fear, for they burnt in the fevered cheeks, as she felt.

"I have no power," replied Mrs. Somers, "none so far as this matter is concerned; and Mr. Lewis tells me that you are prepared to throw doubts on the identity of the nephew of the comtesse, or, rather, on the convictions of Madame de Cenci and her recognition of the youth who has hitherto passed as my grandson. You cannot expect mercy when you are ready to be so troublesome in this unfortunate business. I mean, of course, the death of the comtesse before she could accomplish Hugo's restoration to his real name and inheritance."

"I can only speak the truth," said Leila, quietly. "Mr. Lewis questioned me, and I did not volunteer any information on the subject whatever."

"Then you would rather escape having to give any account as to your share in the matter?" returned Mrs. Somers, eagerly.

"Of course—of course," said the over-pressed girl, eagerly. "What have I to do with it, except in being dragged into its miserable details? It can make no earthly difference to me."

A peculiar expression came into Mrs. Somers' face, and a half cynical smile was on her lips as she replied:

"No, no! none at all. It cannot affect you unless you are worked on by fear or the hope of a bribe from the opposite party. I mean from any possible heirs of Madame de Cenci."

"Never!" exclaimed Leila, scornfully. "It is only an evil nature that could imagine such wickedness."

"Right, child, right," was the almost mournful comment of the woman. "But when you are older you may perhaps understand that it is not always the nature but the temptations that cause the evil. One false step on the ice, and it is vain to try and stop yourself; but this is

folly," she went on, nerving herself from the abstraction into which she had fallen. "The simple matter is this: If you choose to get out of the whole of the entanglements of this business I will enable you to do so, and leave behind you all the trouble and associations of your past life. It has been a sad one, I confess; but you are so young. You have the future before you, and if you will be guided by me it may be a brighter one after all."

"What do you want me to do?" inquired the girl, quickly. "I cannot understand why you should take any interest in me, except to do me simple justice."

"Perhaps I have not such an 'evil nature' as you imagine," returned Mrs. Somers, with bitter emphasis. "I am not long for this world, and I may wish to do some good actions if I have something to repent of. What I propose for you is very simple. I have a distant relative—one that was a dear friend in former days, when we both were ladies' maids together in a noble house. We both married, and we are both widows now. Her husband was half French, half Italian by birth, and she is living now at Nice, on the borders of both countries. I know she has great influence with some of the ladies near her, as she married from one of the first families in the neighbourhood, and has often acted as companion and housekeeper and confidential assistant to them since her widowhood. Now, if you are willing to go to this lady I will give you a letter that will secure you an immediate reception and home. She will either keep you with herself for a time or find you a far better and more permanent situation than what you held at Madame de Cenci's. Are you willing?"

"I do not know. How can I tell?" said Leila, sadly. "It is a terrible thing to go I know not where and by myself, and to a stranger's. No, I will dare all, and remain," she added, after a moment's pause.

"Foolish child. Why, the journey is as nothing when there is money, which I will give you in plenty; and listen. If you decide to go I will send my brother-in-law to escort you safely there. He will not trouble you by any officious attentions," she went on, seeing Leila's involuntary shade of repugnance. "All he will do will be to save you from any trouble on your journey. Think again."

Perhaps Leila did reconsider the situation as the old woman spoke. She closed her eyes as if to shut out the present and contemplate the future. What was before her? Suspicion, search, accusation, trial, and, as was but too probable, condemnation. In the reverse picture was safety and peace and loneliness. Yes, loneliness and isolation from all the heart of woman holds dear. But one was an impossible ideal. The other was offered to her and within her grasp.

"Are you sure? Why should not this person refuse to receive me?" she asked.

"Child, I am near the grave. I have no object in deceiving you. There is no doubt about it. Emilia di Ballard will be kind to you for my sake. It rests with you to win her interest in you. I will give you enough money to bring you back if you are at length utterly weary and disgusted. I can do no more," she concluded.

"Then I will go," said the girl, desperately. "When shall I start?"

"Before many hours are over you shall be ready," returned the woman, calmly. "By this time to-morrow I will arrange for your departure under my brother-in-law's escort. Meanwhile I shall write to Emilia, so that she will be prepared for you. Now go, and send Mr. Lewis to me; not Hugo, mind."

Leila obeyed in silence. She was in actual despair, which prompted any action, however perilous; there was nothing to induce her to remain. Digby had rejected her virtually, Lord Dunallan was but a dangerous ally in her sorrow, and as for Geoffrey Sabine, ah! that was to deny the innocent and the ignorance of their rights. That she knew was all foreign to the noble nature of him with whom she was dealing, and why impose herself as a burden on

him? She was young, a woman, and helpless. Why should she be forced before him on his arrival?

It was honour and consideration for him that prompted her to save him from such temptation and disgrace; and that was enough for the generous nature of the girl to decide on what would be best for him whom she felt might well win a deeper and a more deliberate love than her passing fancy for the suitor of her earliest youth. It was a turning point, and her resolution was at once taken.

"Yes," she said, "I will go. It matters not to anyone or to myself what becomes of me. I can be ready in an hour's time. How soon can I start?"

A fierce gleam of pleasure shot from the old woman's eyes at the despairing consent.

"No—no! Scarcely so soon," she said; "but I will arrange ere twenty-four hours are over, ay, before half that time. Let me see. Yes, I think you can start early in the morning. Meanwhile, keep in your chamber; prepare everything, and I will ensure your safety, and give you due notice of the hour of your departure. Now leave me. I am tired, and have much to arrange."

Leila hastily obeyed, and as she closed the door Mrs. Somers sank back on her pillow and murmured:

"It is true—too true! One step on the downward slippery course, and it leads to crime and destruction. Poor child! poor child! She is young and fair and innocent—a fitting victim for intrigue and wrong. Heaven help me, and—no! no! He can never help me, a hardened veteran in crime."

(To be Continued.)

A GHOST STORY.

There has been great excitement in Glasgow, Scotland, about a house supposed to be haunted. The place was a school: so one Thursday night detectives were deputed to proceed to the house and endeavour to unravel the mystery. They met the janitor by appointment, and were admitted into the school, where they placed themselves in a position from which they could not be seen, with the intention of waiting for what might occur. They had not maintained their watch very long when the cause of the whole delusion disclosed itself. It appears that the houses on the opposite side of the street are occupied by a working class population, who seldom think of drawing down the window-blinds after the gas is lighted. On the wall of the school opposite the windows there are a number of highly-glazed maps, upon which is cast a reflection of the gaslight in the houses opposite. The detectives found that if any movement was made in one of the houses on the other side of the street a reflection of it was made against the highly-glazed maps.

During the past few nights the windows of the school had been left open, and the wind disturbed the maps, which gave the appearance from the outside as if some object was moving through the school. The idea of calling in detectives is very prosaic. It is treatment similar to that given to a ghost by a very matter-of-fact man, who, at the old manor house, at dead of night, saw the curtains slowly open and a ghost approach him, who commenced, "I am the ghost of Squire so and so, who was foully murdered on—" Here the occupant of the bed stopped the ghost by the remark, "My good fellow, it is no business of mine, you had better go to the police-station." The feelings of a snubbed ghost may be readily imagined.

If you know a man who is willing to kiss your boots because you are rich you may be sure that there is someone whom he compels to kiss his boots in return. He who will cringe before one who is bigger than himself will play the tyrant over one smaller than himself.

THE CAUSE OF SNORING.

A WRITER tells how the habit of snoring is acquired, and, better, how it may be cured:—And, first, the cause: We all know that the air reaches the lungs through two channels, the nose and the mouth. The two currents meet in the throat below the soft palate, the end of which hangs loose and swings backward and forward, producing the snoring. If the air reaches the lungs as it should, through the nose, no noise will be made. If it reaches the same through the mouth, the palate will make more noise since it is not the natural channel, but when it rushes through both channels, then it is that the sound sleeper banishes rest from the pillows of his companions by his hideous noise.

The remedy for snoring is to keep the mouth closed; and for this purpose the writer of the article referred to, has invented an article so cheap that anyone can make it, and no snorer should be without it. It consists of a simple cap fitting the head snugly, and a piece of soft material fitting the chin. These are connected with the head cap near the ears. This contrivance prevents the jaw from dropping down, and thereby renders snoring impossible. The great trouble will be to get the people to adopt this invention, since most honest and upright people rarely, if ever, admit that they snore, and will be very indignant if accused of it. As a further inducement to this contrivance it may be added that breathing through the mouth is very detrimental to the health, and that many diseases of the throat and lungs are contracted or aggravated thereby.

MYSTERY.

A FAMILY are pestered and by a mystery. Pebbles and stones are thrown at them by invisible hands during the day, and at night these missiles rattle on the roof like hail. Mrs. Michael Metzler was husking corn one day when somebody or something began to pelt her with stones and clods of earth. She ran home and into the house with a rain of stones at her heels. She was struck and her children were struck. In the house with the doors and windows all closed stones fell at the Metzler's feet, and seemed to come through the ceiling.

Mrs. Metzler doesn't believe in spirits, but she does believe in the stones that strike her in the face and on the head. A priest went to the house to pray the mischief might be stopped. Some stones fell from the ceiling to his feet, and one struck him, admonishing him to leave off his exhortations. So the good man was stoned out of the house, and the pest has not abated nor has the puzzle yet been solved. A reporter went to see and feel if there was any such thing. He was pelted with stones, too, and picked some of them up and carried them away in proof of his statement.

COPYING FAULTS.

MANY people, when they are told to imitate the example of others, are very much like the Chinese tailor to whom was given a coat as a pattern for a new one which he was to make for an English sea-captain. Unfortunately, the sleeve of the pattern coat was patched at the elbow, and when the new garment was brought home with great satisfaction by the tailor, there was a patch on the sleeve of the new coat, just like the old one.

Such people not only imitate the faults, but are far more apt to excel in their imitation of the bad than in their following the good qualities. It is easier to copy the strut of a man who is vain than the calmness and quiet courtesy of the gentleman. It is much easier to imitate the lame walk of a wounded soldier than to pattern after his bravery and endurance.

Let the faults alone, and look only for that

which is truly worth copying; you will teach the learned by the sailor's parrot, brought as a present to his captain's daughter. While lying ill with a severe cough, he had taught the parrot many pretty phrases to surprise Fanny, and so, when the bird was brought to her room Fanny was delighted to hear it cry out: "Long live Fanny! Long live Fanny!"

But the parrot always ended his pretty salute with such a natural imitation of the sailor's spitting and coughing as quite to nullify Fanny's pleasure at the gift. She could never take delight in the bird's fine phrases, for they were always accompanied by the too clever imitation of the sailor's unfortunate habit. Copy only the agreeable and the useful, the true and the good.

PUBLIC AMUSEMENTS.

THE HOLIDAYS.

ADELPHL.—East Lynne; Nicholas Nickleby.

ALHAMBRA.—Rothomago.

ALEXANDRA PALACE.—Little Jack Horner.

AGRICULTURAL HALL, Islington.—Boscombe and Wombwell's Menagerie; Mohawk Minstrels; Macabre's character entertainment, Begone Dull Care.

BRITANNIA.—The Shepherd's Star.

COVENT GARDEN.—Sindbad the Sailor.

CONNAUGHT.—Alone.

CAMBRIDGE HALL OF VARIETIES, Bishopsgate Street.—Double company for the holidays.

CRITERION.—Betsy.

COURT.—The Old Love and the New.

CANTERBURY THEATRE OF VARIETIES, Westminster Bridge Road.—Peri of Peru.

CRYSTAL PALACE.—Jack the Giant Killer.

DUKE'S.—New Babylon. Nothing to Nurse.

EGYPTIAN HALL.—Maskelyne and Cook.

FOLLY.—Married in Haste.

GAETY.—Gulliver.

GRECIAN.—Harlequin Rokoko, the Rock Fiend.

GLOBE.—Les Cloches de Corneville. The Happy Man.

HENGLER'S GRAND CIRQUE.—Equestrian Entertainment.

IMPERIAL.—The Lord of the Manor.

LYCEUM.—Merchant of Venice.

MR. AND MRS. GERMAN REED'S ENTERTAINMENT, Langham Place.—The Pirate's Home; Master Tommy's at Home; A Christmas Mas Stocking.

MARYLEBONE.—Cinderella.

MADAME TUSSAUD'S, Baker Street.—Cetewayo, Beaconsfield Wreath, Oriental Spectacle.

NEW SADLER'S WELLS.—The Forty Thieves.

NEW ALBION.—Jack and Gill.

NEW ELEPHANT AND CASTLE.—Babes in the Wood.

OLYMPIC.—Such a Good Man.

OPERA COMIQUE.—H.M.S. Pinafore.

PAVILION.—Children in the Wood.

PARK.—Beauty and the Beast.

PHILHARMONIC, Islington.—Christmas Party; Lalla Rookh.

PRINCESS'S.—Drink.

PRINCE OF WALES'S.—Ours.

ROYALTY.—Crutch and Toothpick. Balloons.

ST. JAMES'S.—The Falcon.

STANDARD.—Bluebeard Re-wived.

STRAND.—Madame Favart.

ST. JAMES'S HALL.—Moore and Burgess Minstrels.

ROYAL AQUARIUM, Westminster.—Varied amusements from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. M. Dubois' concerts every Saturday. Mrs. Georgina Weldon's choir.

SURREY.—Aladdin.

SANGER'S GRAND NATIONAL AMPHITHEATRE.—Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp.

SUN MUSIC HALL.—Grand Christmas Entertainment.

THEATRE ROYAL, DRURY LANE.—Bluebeard. Morning Performances every Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday at Two.

VAUDEVILLE.—Castles in the Air. The Road to Ruin.

VICTORIA.—Bluff King Hal.

ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS, Regent's Park.

A SECRET SYSTEM.

EVERYONE has heard of the secret police system in Russia—the most wonderful in the world. Social resorts, stores, markets, all are under their control. Secret agents are found everywhere. The universities and high schools literally swarm with them. They are generally recruited among such of the students as show a decided tendency toward "smartness" and are not overburdened by an exaggerated feeling of honour. A handsome monthly salary is offered to them on condition that they will report all that happens amid the turbulent youth of the schools. A man who has once been reported as suspicious is virtually lost in Russia. In every career which he attempts to follow he will be stopped by an invisible hand, and he will be put out of the way once for all at the very first opportunity.

LINKED LOVES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Clarice Villiers; or, What Love Feared."

CHAPTER XX.

ACCUSER AND ACCUSED.

What know ye of the secret of a man?
Well—after all—

TENNYSON.

A FORTNIGHT had passed since the day on which the telegram relative to the Earl of Aurio's sudden indisposition had reached Caerlau Castle—a fortnight not perhaps rendered eventful by any special incident in the lives of the habitants of or visitors to the ancient mansion, but yet an interval of severest heart-trial to more than one of those who were there gathered.

Viscount Alan Fitzvesci had betaken himself to the family seat immediately he learned of the receipt of the telegram. Upon his arrival there, however, the young man found that the earl had recovered from the effects of the sudden seizure and was restored to his usual health. But although the viscount found his father free from any trace of physical suffering, he readily detected that the old man had received some terrible mental shock.

Usually a man of haughty and dignified bearing, the earl appeared at that juncture to have become the victim of an intense nervous weakness pitiable to witness. Although the earl had always displayed a kind of proud affection towards his son, yet he had ever been an undemonstrative and reticent parent—indeed, it was plainly from the paternal side that Fitzvesci had himself inherited his cold and somewhat taciturn disposition.

But on this occasion the Earl of Aurio received the young man with open arms, and seemed to find such comfort in his presence that he could scarcely endure to hear of Fitzvesci's speedy return to Caerlau.

The satisfaction of the old peer at hearing

that Miss Winefrede Glendyr was betrothed to his son was very great—so great, indeed, that when he had retained the viscount by his side for a couple of weeks, and had regained his customary equanimity, he permitted Fitzvesci to seek again the companionship of his fiancée and her relatives.

The young soldier's enforced absence had been in no degree unpleasing to the heiress of Caerlau. On the contrary, she had looked upon it as a welcome relief. In the terrible revulsion of feeling which had ensued in Winefrede's heart upon Judith Vanneck's revelation of Valentine Ponsonby's perfidy, it seemed to her that it mattered nothing what she did. It was while the girl was in this mood of bitterness that her suitor's proposal was made. She accepted him in sheer indifference.

"What did it matter?" she said to herself, with an unwomanly cynicism. "As well marry Alan Fitzvesci as another. It would please her people. As for herself, such union could neither help nor harm her. Love was a myth and a mockery. It were better to marry this cold-blooded yet honourable man than go on being the quarry at which hosts of vulture-like adventurers and fortune-hunters were always making their ravenous swoops.

None the less after the fatal word was spoken Winefrede found that she had made a grievous mistake in uttering it. What was she then better than the adventurers whom her soul condemned? She had plighted her troth to a man whom she knew assuredly that she did not love. She would marry him in the perfect conviction that she never could love him. Was that honest? Was it womanly? She was not so self-deceived as to answer yes.

It was a fortunate chance for Fitzvesci that at that juncture circumstances called him away. For Winefrede felt the yoke of her troth-pledge bitter enough to bear even while he was absent. Had he been with her every day; had she been required to enact the part of a betrothed woman, even in the least degree, the thing would have simply become intolerable.

The girl had given her suitor no false hopes. She was too noble to use such deceit by silence. When she consented to become Lord Fitzvesci's wife, she gave him clearly to know that she did not love him. This avowal disturbed the even pulses of the viscount not at all. He loved her with as much fervour as his self-contained nature was capable of doing.

He was fully aware of the fact that the match would be one acceptable alike to his family and hers. And, moreover, Winefrede Glendyr was a woman who would do full credit to his choice and make an ideal Countess of Auriol when the old earl was gathered to his fathers. Viewing these advantages, Alan Fitzvesci was abundantly satisfied with his success.

So in Fitzvesci's absence Winefrede bore her trouble as bravely as she might. But she was stricken sorely. It was not until she needed to tear up her love for Valentine Ponsonby by the very roots that she became aware of its tenacious strength. Unknown almost to herself the sentiment had been growing for long days, and to banish it seemed like parting with her second self. But she strove bravely. She had erred.

The man around whom her love had twined itself never existed. The Valentine Ponsonby whom Winefrede had loved was noble, chivalrous and true. The real man was base, false, and a traitor. Knowing that, why should she not at once cast him from her thought?

Thus Miss Glendyr reasoned. But in such matters when woman's heart does conflict with her reason, it is a bitter strife and one from which she does not emerge unscathed. Neither did Winefrede Glendyr so emerge.

Judith Vanneck marked with guilty consternation that day by day the heiress waxed paler and thinner. Even unobservant Mrs. Glendyr noted the change with wonder and apprehension, and when, after his two weeks' absence, Lord Fitzvesci returned to Caerlau, he was unpleasantly struck by the change in the appearance of his fiancée.

Miss Vanneck too had ample cause of her own for uneasiness. Oscar's attentions were certainly

cooling. For some days he had managed, on one excuse or the other, to absent himself from Caerlau, and even when at home appeared to avoid the governess. Judith had told him of the ruse which she had every reason to believe had been the principal means of causing Miss Glendyr to accept Lord Fitzvesci. But from the moment of that revelation Judith had detected a steady decrease in Oscar's affection for her.

Perhaps although he was not sufficiently high-minded to refuse to benefit by treachery he was yet repelled by its agent. Be that as it may, he did not scruple, when Judith Vanneck, driven to desperation, reminded him of his promises, to put her off with a few curt phrases about "biding their time," which might mean much or nothing; but which the governess, probably justly, interpreted to portend the ruin of all her ambitious hopes.

The blow was a terrible one, and the victim did not bear it well. She had sold her soul to evil for this one thing—that she might have become the wife of wealthy Oscar Glendyr, and when that hope waned her conscience resumed its power, and she determined to confess her treason to the man whom she had injured.

Valentine Ponsonby went about his business affairs with a steady mechanical regularity—in fact, his application was unremitting. He seemed to be working to bring everything up to the most perfect order, as for some ulterior object.

That object was his departure from Caerlau. Since that last blow, when the woman he loved had treated him with extremest contumely, the place had become intolerable to the young man. Mr. Swire had written him to the effect that circumstances still required his presence at Antwerp and that Valentine was to continue at his post and "act like a reasonable creature."

The former counsel Ponsonby found it simply impossible to follow, and—in an excited incoherent second epistle he had informed Swire that he would get everything in order on the demesne at Caerlau, but come what might he would leave there in a fortnight, and Mr. Swire must make provision for that contingency. He deprecated humbly the indignation which he deserved and regretted the ill return he was making for the elder man's kindness, but it was impossible he should stay longer.

Miss Vanneck did not find it quite an easy matter to secure the interview which she desired with Valentine Ponsonby. The young man's visits to Caerlau were reduced to those which were absolutely indispensable. When he came to the castle he confined his visits strictly to the apartments of Sir Cynric Rhys, varied by occasional very short conversations with Mrs. Glendyr upon some entirely business topics. The old familiar intercourse, when it had seemed that the young manager was regarded as one of the family, was over for ever.

But Judith succeeded at last. She had noticed that Valentine, on leaving the admiral, frequently quitted the castle by a rear door which opened on a path through one of the shrubberies by which he could reach the house of Owain Dinas readily, and in this spot Miss Vanneck, who knew the manager was closeted with Sir Cynric, that morning, determined to await the young man.

If Valentine Ponsonby had been at all in the vein for admiring female charms, appropriately set, he would have thought as he rounded a corner of the winding laurel hedge that he had come upon a very pretty picture. For certainly Judith Vanneck, attired in a charmingly simple morning toilette, and reclining, book in hand, under a little rustic canopy, smothered thickly with the fragrant blossoms of some magnificent rose-trees, was not one whom masculine eyes could behold without considerable admiration.

Valentine raised his hat, and would have passed on but Miss Vanneck arose from her seat and extended her hand, and he saw then that a colloquy was inevitable. The young manager was not very observant at that time, but even he could not fail to notice, now that he was near to her, that the governess's handsome face wore a distinct expression of agitation, almost of perturbation.

"You are almost a stranger now, Mr. Ponsonby," she said, after the first greeting.

There was some constraint in the faint smile which passed over the young man's face.

"Yes, almost. I have been very busy." *He was silent.*
"We all regret that you cannot spare some time from more important pursuits to waste... shall I say—with us?" Mrs. Glendyr was saying so only yesterday."

"Mrs. Glendyr is very kind, and you also, Miss Vanneck. The loss is mine, but I assure you it is unavoidable, and I am only fit for business."

"That was not the impression we formed of you, Mr. Ponsonby, when you first appeared at Caerlau. I would rather have said, that you were pre-eminently fitted for society."

Valentine shook his head.

"First impressions are often very deceptive," he said, curtly. "But I have some important letters to answer. May I beg of you to excuse me, Miss Vanneck?"

He raised his hat, and would have passed on but that Judith laid her small hand upon his arm.

"Stay, Mr. Ponsonby," she said. "I have something I wish to speak to you about."

Judith regarded the young man's face earnestly as she spoke. She was shocked to note how changed it had become during the last few days. The noble outline of the features was the same, but in the haggard expression and wan hue of the countenance it had been difficult to trace the Valentine Ponsonby of a few short weeks back.

"And this is, in part at least, my work," she thought. Perhaps some remains of a feeling almost tender, with which she had regarded Valentine in the past, mingled with Judith Vanneck's troubles of conscience. Yet why should she pity him? she told herself quickly. What was he to her? At least, he, like herself, was an adventurer. He had played for high stake and lost, as she also had done. Still she at least owed him some reparation.

"In what can I be of service to you?" queried Valentine, finding that Miss Vanneck preserved silence.

"Oh, it is no question of that, Mr. Ponsonby," responded Judith, collecting herself. "Indeed, I hardly know what impels me to speak to you to-day and to speak too upon a subject both unpleasant and humiliating to me."

"To you?"

"Yes. It must be that the motive is pity towards you, for you, like myself, are scorned by the world and hate it."

"Your pardon, Miss Vanneck, I do not hate the world. And I should hope," he went on with an attempt at gaiety, "that a lady with your advantages has not great enmity to it."

"Can you say that? Are not you and I alike dependents? Have we not to perform duties not far from removed servile ones for those who are only better than ourselves by the position in which partial fate has placed them? Do we not alike eat the bread of others, and take the gold of those whose servants we are?"

Judith spoke vehemently, and in a manner quite unusual to her. Valentine regarded her curiously.

"You are unjust," he said, "alike to fortune and to our patrons. That you and I have to earn our living is, I presume, a truism. But that is the lot of the greater portion of humanity. And our positions here would be by most held as enviable ones."

"Can you truly say that, Mr. Ponsonby?" queried Miss Vanneck, with a penetrating glance.

Valentine's pale face flushed a little at the point-blank question.

"I really do not see why we should discuss the question," he answered, with some brusqueness.

"Because I have been the instrument of injuring you, and regret to see that it has caused you so much misery. Ah, you ought to be braver, Mr. Ponsonby, and when you throw for high stakes and lose, should bear up like a man of the world. Even a woman can set you

an example. Plots cannot always succeed. The best-laid schemes may fail."

"You are speaking in riddles," Valentine replied. "I know nothing of plots or schemes."

"Bah! You may as well be frank with me, for I will honestly confess that I am very sorry that I have stood in your way. It was not at least my business to unmask your plans."

The episode of the coat-of-arms in his Horace flashed across Valentine's mind. It was of that he thought that the governess spoke. The idea brought back vividly the humiliations which discovery had caused him, and it was with a not unnatural indignation that he replied:

"Really, Miss Vanneck, while quite appreciating the interest you appear to take in my affairs, I must altogether decline to pursue the present very peculiar conversation."

"That tone is useless with me," responded the governess. "I speak to you to-day because I am honestly sorry that I have caused you to lose so great a prize."

Valentine fancied he comprehended a palpable allusion, and his anger got the better of his courtesy.

"Do you dare to allude to Miss Glendyr in those terms?" he cried.

"Certainly not," was the response, in a tone not without a touch of scorn. "But to Miss Glendyr's fortune!"

"This passes patience!" exclaimed the young man. "Miss Vanneck, I am truly sorry for you. I had esteemed you much once. Even when your heedless act caused me pain and injury, I put it down to mere thoughtlessness. But such a gross accusation as you now make is as unworthy of your lips as of my ears. This conversation must end."

It was the turn of the governess to lose temper.

"What, you would deny that you aspired to win Winefrede and Winefrede's fortune when there is your own writing against you?"

Then, irritated by the look of incredulity on the young man's face, Judith related rapidly the incident of the leaf of the blotting-pad, making, however, no mention of Mrs. Appowell. As she ended Valentine covered his face with his hands and strong spasms shook his frame. When he removed them Judith was shocked at the ghastly change which had come over his countenance.

"You have done me a cruel wrong, Miss Vanneck," he said, brokenly. "How had I ever injured you that you should have dealt thus traitorously with me?"

The epithet he had used roused the governess's spirit.

"I will tell you now that my own schemes have failed," she replied. "Your plot interfered with one of mine. And, besides, I did it for Winnie's sake. It'll beseems you who tried to get an innocent girl and her wealth in your power to twit another with treason. Still, I am sorry for my deed. I have repented of it fully a thousand times since its perpetration, especially when I saw—as who could fail to see?—how you have taken the failure to heart. I have made the only reparation in my power by this confession. Whatever you may be, I had no right to injure you thus, and I regret and shall ever regret my act."

"Will it comfort you to learn that you have wronged an innocent man? Ah, you are incredulous, but so it is. Why should I now deny either to you or to the world that I love Miss Glendyr? Yes, love her with the fullest love of a man's heart. But I worshipped her silently and afar off, as a votary might adore a bright star. I knew that she never could be mine. And there was no leaven of mercenary thought in my mind. As for my letter to Mr. Swire, its allusions have no such reference as you have put upon them. It matters little now, but foully as you have wronged me, Judith Vanneck, I thank you that you have revealed this to me this day. When I am far from hence Swire will at least be able to exonerate me from this accusation; and he will do it."

There was something in the young man's tone and manner which carried conviction to the governess's heart.

"Far away!" she whispered. "What do you mean, Mr. Ponsonby?"

"That I can no longer bear the torture which I suffer here. To-morrow I quit Caerlau. I have arranged everything, so that my absence will cause no inconvenience till Mr. Swire shall send a substitute. He must be here himself shortly."

"And I have driven you away," cried Judith, regretfully.

"In part, yes. But think no more of that. You are but one instrument in the iron hand of fate which on all sides crushes me down. Each one whom I love turns from me. The world is very cruel."

"Oh, Mr. Ponsonby, if you are guiltless in this matter, what am I?"

"Think no more of that. It is useless to waste regrets on the inevitable. Misfortune will pursue me to my grave. What matters it whether your hand or another's strike a blow more or less? Your name will not be mentioned by me, but doubtless when Swire comes he will exonerate me from this charge if it be named to him. That is enough. I freely forgive you. Good-bye, Miss Vanneck, we shall meet no more."

He extended his hand, which Judith pressed with a light but convulsive grasp. Then as Valentine released her taper fingers and passed on with a grave set face and dejected mien, she sank on the seat and burst into a flood of bitter tears.

CHAPTER XXI.

A DISASTROUS CHARGE.

Another day
And the wrong'd exile shall be faraway.

VALENTINE PONSONBY had announced to Sir Cynric Eby his irrevocable determination to quit Caerlau and relinquish his post. The old man, deeply grieved, used all the arguments and persuasion possible, but failed to shake the manager's resolution.

Mrs. Glendyr also felt intense vexation at Ponsonby's defection. She had not the positive affection for the young man which the admiral had conceived. Still, her liking for him was great and she had a very clear comprehension of the advantage of his services.

On the morning of the day which Valentine had appointed for his departure the viscount was absent in pursuit of a favourite sport. The manager did not see Winefrede ere he started, but Mrs. Glendyr bade him farewell with regretful cordiality and the admiral with almost paternal affection.

The amusement to which Lord Fitzvesci was about to address himself was not without its pleasurable excitement for a skilful horseman, especially in a country and at a time of year when there was but scanty sport of any kind going on, and without sport the viscount cared little for life in the provinces.

The business on which the young soldier was sent was then to assist Farmer Morgan to catch some wild ponies for market purposes. In parts of Wales, as on Dartmoor, herds of these animals, in a wild or semi-wild state, are found. But the singular fact connected with their capture in the former country is that the lasso is not unfrequently employed to secure the ponies, the rope being flung by a horseman, as is usual in Southern America.

Of course the little Welsh quadruped yields far inferior sport to the stout and high-mettled mustang of the prairies and savannahs of the New World, but nevertheless, the successful pursuit of the former calls for a quick eye, a strong arm, and a firm seat on the part of the lasso thrower. In more than one instance the Mexican guacho has advantages which make up for the greater strength of the animal he essays to capture.

As an equestrian he has no equal: man and horse are as if united into a centaur. The animal seems to understand and ever to anticipate the lightest wish of his rider and can thus

aid him in the pursuit and capture. Then, the high round pommel of the Mexican saddle permits the lasso to be attached to it, an advantage not possessed by the English.

Valentine had sent on his slender belongings to the station by the castle dog-cart, and had taken a circuitous route on foot, in order to have an opportunity of calling upon some cottagers whom he had learned to know and to whom he desired to say farewell.

The young man was not alone. Old Dinas had resolved to accompany him to the railway. Valentine's departure from Caerlau had come upon Owain like a thunderclap. He had learned to regard the manager with a curious half-respectful, half-paternal affection, and could scarcely endure to lose him. Yet the shrewdly observant old butler had not failed to notice how terribly Ponsonby had suffered of late. Nor had he any doubt of the cause.

And an escape from Caerlau appeared to be the only possible means of relief and peace, Owain accepted the inevitable, with the best grace he might. As the two men followed a footpath which wound partially around a considerable hill, some faint hallos were heard in the distance.

"What is that, Owain? There are no shepherds in this acid tract, I think."

"No, no, sir. There is not grass enough hereabouts to feed a single sheep. No indeed! Farmer Morgan's land lies over the hill. I think it is Morgan catching ponies, sir, and shouting. And if so then my Lord Fitzvesci is there too. Ah, yes!"

Valentine made no immediate comment on this piece of intelligence. Then after a short pause he said:

"Owain, I should like to see his lordship again ere I leave Wales—at a distance only. Can we manage that, think you?"

"Yes, indeed, that will be easy enough. We shall pass Morgan's. But I do not think I would want to see Lord Fitzvesci if I was Mr. Valentine Ponsonby."

"And why not, Owain?" said the young man, with a slight smile.

"Because we should not have lost you from Caerlau if this soldier lord had not come thither. I never wish to see him again although he is to be the husband of our young lady—the more is the pity."

"You are rather prejudiced against Lord Fitzvesci, Owain."

"Ah, is it prejudice, do you think, Mr. Ponsonby? Ah, no. He is a soldier, and he is of good family and the admirals do love him well. Moreover, he is well to look at in limb and face. Ah, yes, he is a pretty man. And he is like you, Mr. Ponsonby."

Valentine cast a quick startled glance at the speaker.

"Not much of that, Owain," he responded with an air of indifference."

"Ah, but there is though," returned the old man. "I have looked at his face many times and thought so. Yes Lord Fitzvesci is—like yourself, sir—a pretty man. But I do not like him, and I am very sorry for our young lady, for the viscount has the cold heart of the Sassenach. Ah, yes, I am sure of that."

"But I am a Sassenach, Owain, and so, I presume, also convicted of cold heartedness."

"Ah, no, sir. That is quite different. I do notice men much and consider their ways, and I have found that if you are Sassenach by blood you have a Welsh heart, ab, yes."

As the old man gave utterance to the highest compliment which he thought it possible for anyone to pay, a loud, sharp cry arose in the distance, followed by a series of shouts, evidently produced by some person in peril or great terror.

Valentine and Owain had crossed the crest of the hill and achieved a considerable portion of the descent into the adjacent valley. Facing them as they came down was the steep slope of yet another hillside, beyond which lay Morgan's homestead. From that direction the cries had proceeded.

The two men were not left long in doubt as to their cause. Over the brow of the hill before



[REMORE.]

them suddenly appeared the scattered forms of a small herd of ponies, who galloped down the hillside in various directions and at a great pace. The shouts still continued and appeared to be approaching.

"Something is wrong, Owain," said Valentine, hurriedly. "Let us hasten down."

Both men broke into a quick run along the declivity, which they reached in a few seconds, for the old man's agility was unimpaired. They had begun the ascent of the opposite slope with their faces turned to the summit, when a sight presented itself which, for a moment, stayed their steps and well nigh made their hearts stand still.

Over the hill top came one of the ponies, its shaggy form strongly but momentarily relieved against the sky, ere it plunged down the declivity which Valentine and Owain were ascending. In the broad blaze of the June sunlight it was not difficult to see at that distance, both that the animal was in a state of maddest fright and also the cause of its terror.

The loop of a lasso was round its neck, the cord from which was strained taut for some yards behind the animal as if by a heavy weight. The object which caused this tension was also plain to see. It was the prostrate figure of a man to whose right arm the end of a rope was attached, and whose left hand had also apparently grasped the strong cord with a convulsive grip. Both arms were extended full above the man's bare head as he was dragged on in the frantic flight of the mad brute.

On—on came the pony down in the very direction of Valentine and his companion, and apparently unconscious of aught save the helpless impediment which it hurried along. Another form appeared over the hill—then another. They were horsemen following at speed on trail of the flying pony.

It appeared that they caught immediate sight of Ponsonby and Owain, for they set up a series of sharp, broken cries to the men that they should intercept the animal. Both had made ready to essay this the instant that they re-

covered from their first surprise. But the enterprise would be by no means an easy one even if the pony continued his course directly towards them.

The hillside was stony, but in places very steep, and to the originally rapid pace to which fear had impelled the little brute would be added the impetus derived from the descent of a steep declivity. Even the weight of the man whom it trailed along did not under such circumstances appear to act in the least as a clog on the animal's rapid gallop.

How then would it be possible to stop it even if Valentine or Owain were deaf enough to catch it? And the latter feat was in itself almost impossible. There were of course neither bridle nor reins. Only by a sharp and secure grip of the lasso-rope or the rough shock mane could there be any hope of intercepting the flyer.

The two men had sprung apart, Valentine to the right and Owain to the left in order to double the chances if the pony should diverge a little. Their expectations in this matter were speedily fulfilled. The horse's bloodshot eyes detected them as they ran towards it, and with a neigh half of terror, half of defiance, it turned a little off to the right without, however, for a moment impairing its speed.

On the hillside in that direction had once stood a small grove or spinney of ash and elm. Most of the trees had been felled some years previous and their stumps still remained, some level with the ground, some above it. In occasional patches there were some remnants of the original undergrowth of hazel and thorn and maple, but much of the space was tolerably clear. Towards this spot the pony headed.

"Come on, Owain," shouted Valentine, as he too turned off. "Follow me and stop him if he returns."

But although the young man pushed his pace he had small hope of success in stopping the horse. Still their relative proximity enabled him to discern that the prostrate man was not dead. For Valentine could see that the left hand was clutching afresh at the rope and that

the man was uttering a feeble cry at prospect of help.

The next instant the pony entered the upper extremity of the partially cleared ground. At the same moment Valentine dashed into the lower corner of it. Here where the obstacles might perhaps cause the flying animal to moderate his speed, was the young man's only chance.

His conjecture was correct. The brute was compelled to slacken its pace considerably, in such sort that presently Valentine found himself below it on the slope. At that moment a cry of agony smote on his ear. It proceeded from the prostrate man.

"Good heavens, he has struck his head against one of the tree stumps," thought Valentine, "Is he dead?"

A thick hazel stood in Valentine's way. A sudden idea flashed upon him. He sprang behind it and peered through. The pony was rushing on in that very direction. Nearer—nearer! Then at the spot. The animal sprang aside to escape the tree.

At that instant Valentine bent its branches earthward with a strength born of the excitement. For a moment the pony was entangled in the stems and fell to his knees, ploughing still down the declivity. But ere he could rise Valentine's hand was entangled in his mane, and his cry to Owain rang out.

The fierce little brute fought him with fore feet and teeth, and it needed his utmost efforts to restrain it even temporarily. But ere it could free itself Owain came to his aid, and rendered it hopelessly a captive.

Then Valentine ran back to the man lying still and prone. His face was white as a shroud, his eyelids closed, his brow covered with blood. Was he dead? And Valentine fell upon his knees beside him and clasped him frantically while his bitter wail rung out.

"Oh, that I had died for thee!"

It was Alan, Viscount Fitzvesci!

(To be Concluded in our Next.)



[RIVAL KINSMEN.]

ROB ROY MACGREGOR;
OR,
THE HIGHLAND CHIEFTAIN.
A ROMANCE OF SCOTLAND.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"Amy Robart," "The Bondage of Brandon,"
"Breaking the Charm," "Ethel Arbutnot,"
or, Who's Her Husband?" &c., &c.

CHAPTER X.

A TIMELY INTERFERENCE.

Charmed are we by some mysterious link,
Which binds the future and the past together,
Yet keep them far apart.

FORTUNATELY for Frank the sword passed through his cloak without doing him any injury, and the next minute he produced his own weapon, and the duel between the cousins proceeded with energy. Both were perfect masters of the art of fence, and for a time neither could claim any decided advantage, though Rashleigh attacked with such impetuosity that Frank was compelled to give ground.

Suddenly his foot slipped, and losing his guard, he was to a certain extent at his opponent's mercy. Shortening his sword, Rashleigh made a pass at him, and Frank felt the cold steel graze his ribs.

"Ha!" cried Rashleigh, "Fortune favours me."

"Not so," replied Frank; "I am not hurt."

And before he could recover himself he seized him by the throat with one hand, and was about to run him through the body with the other. At this juncture, so critical for

Rashleigh, a stranger, who had come upon them unawares, grappled with him, pulling him back by the exercise of great strength.

"Stay your hand, young man!" he exclaimed. "Art you not ashamed to be brawling in the College Gardens like two unruly apprentices. Ha!" he added, "my conscience. It is the two Osbaldistone lads. Surely, Mr. Rashleigh, you should know better."

Rashleigh regarded him sullenly, but he still kept his sword in his hand, as if he had no mind to let the contest rest where it was. It was Rob Roy who had interfered in the quarrel between the two cousins, and they both saw that he was thoroughly in earnest to prevent any further collision. Frank was panting with rage, and could scarcely contain himself, but seeing Rashleigh sheath his sword he did the same thing.

"I cannot thank you for appearing on the scene as you have done," he exclaimed. "I shall continue this contest at a more favourable opportunity, and I may say, Mr. Campbell, or Mr. Macgregor, or whatever you like to call I, think your interference is altogether uncalled for."

Rob Roy was about to make answer to this speech, when Rashleigh extended his hand and claimed priority.

"My cousin," he said, "must in fairness admit that he forced this quarrel on me. I didn't seek it. Perhaps it is as well that you did come up, or I might have done him a more serious injury."

Frank laughed at this.

"You stood in more need of assistance than I did," he remarked.

"Are you hurt?" asked Rob Roy. "It's nae particular business o' mine, but you seemed to put your hand to your side like a—"

"A mere scratch," interrupted Frank. "Mr. Rashleigh Osbaldistone would have had more cause to regret your non-arrival than I should."

"That's true enough," replied Rob. "I saved his bluid from watering the college grounds, for your cauld iron would ha' become

acquaint wi' his best bluid had I not come up. For the luv o' heaven ha' sense. I canna' see you, Mr. Francis, done wrang to for Miss Vernon's sake, and I ha' need o' Mr. Rashleigh."

At the mention of Diana Vernon's name a black cloud obscured the face of Rashleigh Osbaldistone. Frank was not slow to notice this.

"He loves her," he thought, "and hates me all the more in consequence."

There was a pause, during which both the young men tried to master their emotion.

"Mr. Rashleigh," continued Rob Roy, "I ha' news for you. Come and walk wi' me."

"With all the pleasure in the world," replied Rashleigh. "Any relief from the uncongenial society in which I find myself at the present moment will be agreeable."

At this ungracious remark Frank glared at him.

"Pardon me, Mr. Macgregor," he cried, "I will not permit him to escape me in the manner he proposes. You know something about my affairs, and you are well aware that he has behaved like a villain to me and mine."

"That's a' understood," answered Rob Roy.

"I repeat he shall not escape me! And though I believe you mean to act kindly by me, I will brook no interference on any man's part!"

"My word, I never saw a waur daft callant!"

"Call me what you like. I will take my kinsman before a magistrate!"

Saying this, Frank seized Rashleigh by the collar, and in spite of his struggles, held him tightly.

"Release me!" said Rashleigh, "or you will repent it!"

"Never!"

"He speaks truth," exclaimed Rob Roy. "You will repent it. I know all that is going on. He has the old trap set for you. Morris is ready to make his charge of robbery against you, and I dare not be of service to you, as I was at Squire Ingleton's, for it is as much as

my head is worth to appear before a' of these baillie creatures."

"Perhaps it will be as well for you to mind your own business," replied Frank, who was beside himself with passion.

"Hoot, toot, mon!" rejoined Rob Roy. "If you ha' nae mair sense than that comes to I ha' done wi' you in the reasoning line, and must treat you like ony wild beast."

Taking him by the arm he dragged him by main force away from Rashleigh, and held him as if he had been a child. It was impossible for him to free himself from the iron-like grip of the stalwart Highlander.

"Now, Mr. Rashleigh, make a' pair of legs worth twa pair of arms," said Rob. "Ye ken fu' weel that you ha' business waiting."

Rashleigh bestowed one of his blackest looks upon his cousin.

"I go," he replied. "But you ha' The Macgregor to thank for your escape. A time will come when I shall inflict upon you that chastisement which you ha' so richly deserved, and which is only postponed."

With these words on his lips, he hastened away, and was soon lost to sight among the trees and bushes. Then, and not until then, Rob Roy relinquished his hold of Frank, who was frowning with ill-suppressed rage.

"Why did you interfere?" he asked, reproachfully.

"For your sake," was the answer.

"The wretch has escaped me. Perhaps he carries on his person the bills and papers I require."

"If so, you could not have got them. I tell you, mon, that he would ha' had you in gaol in less time than it takes to count twa. Go back to the baillie and start for the clachan of Aberfoyle. Ye maun get out o' Glasgow as quik as may be."

"But—"

"I'll nae ha'e 'buts.' Would you run your head agen a brick wall. Din fash yersel' ony mair. Ye ha' a true friend in me."

Frank would have continued to argue the point but Rob Roy cut short any further discussion by leaving him to himself and hastening after Rashleigh, who probably was waiting for him at some spot known to them both. There was nothing to be done but to take the advice of The Macgregor, and Frank moodily returned to the house of Mr. Nicoll Jarvie. The wound he had received was so slight that he took no notice of it, and as he suffered no inconvenience he speedily forgot it.

CHAPTER XI.

TO THE CLACHAN OF ABERFOYLE.

EDGAR: "Oh, sir, fly this place. Intelligence is given where you are hid."

LEAR: "How now, are the horses ready?"

EDGAR: "Ready, my lord." SHAKESPEARE.

The time had passed rapidly, and Frank found that he was a little late for dinner, which had for some moments been smoking on the board, somewhat to the annoyance of the baillie, who was the soul of punctuality.

"Ye ha' been very lang in coming," remarked Mr. Jarvie.

"It is lucky I am here at all," replied Frank. "Had Rashleigh had his way, I should have been either dead or badly wounded, or had the luck gone the other way, been in gaol for slaying my kinsman."

Both Mr. Jarvie and Owen looked up in surprise, and begged to be informed as to what had happened. Frank gratified their curiosity briefly, and they both became grave.

"Aw'm thinking that Robin gave ye gude advice," said the baillie. "There is naething to be done here wi' Rashleigh."

"But what on earth can we do among the Highland glens?" asked Frank. "I confess that I am fairly bewildered."

"Ye maun leave a' that to Rob. He has a lang head and a kindly heart. I'm related to him, being a kind of cousin several times removed, and he'll not see ony wrang come to me."

"Perhaps he will not be so considerate to me."

"We shall see. He has given you na cause to doot him sae far, and though he is a disloyal traitor and a Hieland robber to boot, and mixed up wi' that fause loon Rashleigh, he may see a way out of the trouble which is not clear to our en."

Frank was not altogether satisfied with this explanation, but he was really in such an embarrassing position that he could not very well act otherwise than follow the instructions given him by the outlaw. He fancied that Diana Vernon was watching over his fate in some secret and mysterious way, and there was a hope in his mind that he would soon see her again.

Absence from her had only made his heart grow fonder, and he admitted to himself that he loved her desperately and dearly. He fondly imagined that she would not carry out her intention of taking the veil. He hoped that something might arise to prevent it. If she did not bury herself in the seclusion of a cloister, he vowed that she should not be the wife of Rashleigh.

Sooner would he kill him in cold blood. That they were rivals for her affections he knew, and that circumstance intensified the feeling of hatred which existed between them. When dinner was over, they prepared to start. Owen would have been glad to accompany them, but it was considered best for him to remain on the spot and watch the course of events in the city.

"It was precisely what Mr. Owen was fit for," remarked the baillie; "and he would be doing mair gude keeping his een on MacVittie, who was a canny chiel as there was to be found in' Scotland, than by risking his life among the callants in the hills."

Andrew Fairserne brought Frank's horse and his own to Mr. Jarvie's house, and as the clock struck the hour of two they made a start. It was a relief to all parties when they got out of the limits of the city of Glasgow, for though neither the baillie nor Frank gave utterance to his thoughts, they were fearful of the machinations of Rashleigh, and had expected to be stopped by some officer bearing a warrant.

Andrew was extremely anxious to know where they were going and on what business they were bent. Riding up to them, he ventured to ask the question, which brought upon him the full measure of the baillie's wrath.

"It's nae business of yours whether we are bent," he cried. "This gentleman, Mr. Osbaldestone, has hired you for a fair wage, and it's your lawfu' duty to gang anywhere at his bidding."

"He's naid me neither wage nor board-wage," replied Andrew. "But I'll own he's my maister; but at the same time I dinna undertake to serve twa maisters."

"Haud your tongue, you knave," said the baillie.

"Not for you or the likes o' you!"

"If I had you in the Saut Market o' Glasgow I'd punish you wi' fine and imprisonment."

"You may be a varra fine baillie in the ceety," replied Andrew, insolently, "but here on these moors you are no more than ony ither mon. I trow!"

Here Frank was obliged to interfere, for he did not wish the baillie to be angered by the ill-temper of Andrew.

"Leave him to me, sir," he exclaimed; "he means no haru'."

"Meibes so, but he suld not let his unruly tongue wag at sic a rate."

"I'm willing," said Andrew, "to serve Mr. Osbaldestone without fee or reward, though I did leave a gude place for him, yet my contention is that I ha' a right to know where I am ganging."

"We have business in the Highlands," replied Frank.

At this announcement Andrew let the reins fall and held up his hands, while a ludicrous expression of despair crossed his face.

"I ha' a firm hope you ha' made your will, sir," he said.

"Indeed, I have not. Why should I do so?"

"If you gang muckle further you'll come to

the ground where Rob Roy and his thievlin' gillies live. They hate a baillie as much as they do an Englishman, an' it will be a lang rope and a short shrift for both of ye."

"And pray what will they do with you?"

"Oh! I ken them a' weel eneuch. I ha' bought wi' them, sauld wi' them, and eaten and drunken wi' them. I wadna be afeared o' a whole army o' the breekless callants!" replied Andrew.

They had now left the city far behind, and a mist rising from the river Clyde hid even the spires of the churches from view. The ground they were traversing was a barren moor on which not a tree was to be seen, and even the heather appeared to be coarse and stunted. No living thing crossed their path, and the only birds that occasionally flew over their heads were curlew or a pheasant.

Andrew went on to assure his master that he had no fear of the Highlanders, and that his concern was entirely for him and Mr. Jarvie. Suddenly a strange-looking figure came from the heather, behind a clump of which it had been stretched at full length. It was sparsely clad, and a shock head of hair was partially hidden by a megged cap.

"The lord save us!" cried Andrew, who quickly lost his bold air as he slid off his horse and crouched beside it.

"What's the matter?" asked Frank, who could not refrain from laughing.

"Diana let him kill me, your honour," replied Andrew. "It's one of the Hieland reavers."

"I thought you were not afraid of a Highlander."

"I'm a wee bit glen to boastin' and braggin'," replied Andrew. "I ha' a dread of the creatures, and I take bock agin all I ha' said, sir."

Frank paid no more attention to Andrew, but regarded the stranger more closely, and felt convinced that he was no other than the assistant gaoler who had let him into the Tolbooth the night before.

"My conscience," said Nicoll Jarvie, "it's Robin's gillie, the Dougal creature. He must ha' thought we'd be waitin' a gude, and I matin say that it is varra thoughtfu' o' him."

Dougal, for it was he, approached smilingly.

"She'll do you nae hurt," he exclaimed, alluding to himself. "The laird bid me look out for the shentlemons and tak you to an inn for the nicht. To-morrow we'll hie us to the clachan, where you'll find nae drawn dirks than open bibles."

"Deil doot ye," replied the baillie.

Andrew mounted his horse again, when he saw that the Dougal creature's intentions were of a peaceable nature.

"Wha's that he's sayin' aboot dirks?" he asked.

"Gie nae offense wi' that clavering tongue o' yours, neither meddle nor mak, mon, and the kilted loons will let you bide," answered the baillie.

Andrew muttered something to himself which was inaudible, and Dougal trotted on ahead like a Scotch pony, showing that he was perfectly at home on his native heather. The party proceeded now with more assurance of safety, for they were satisfied that no one would interfere with them so long as they had one of Rob Roy's own men as a sort of body-guard to protect them.

CHAPTER XII.

AT THE HIGHLAND INN.

From the alehouse and the inn
Opening on the narrow street
Came the loud convivial din,
Singing and applause of feet.

LONGFELLOW.

TOWARDS evening the worthy baillie and Frank Osbaldestone saw some lights in a valley which indicated that they were approaching a village.

"Hech! mon," cried Mr. Nicoll Jarvie, "we're nearing the clachan of Aberfoyle, or I'm greatly mistaken."

"If that is the case, baillie," replied Frank, "I cannot say that I am sorry, for on my word I am getting hungry; we have had a long ride and the inner man will assert himself."

"Ay, ay, the inner man, as ye ca' him, will cry cupboard. I wadna be averse me ainsel' to a wee bit haggis or a sheep's head weel cookit."

Up to the present time, Dougal had kept steadily ahead, but now he was nowhere to be seen.

"Ma conscience," continued Nicoll Jarvie, "what's the Dougal creature?"

"I cannot see him," replied Frank.

"The Hieland mascal he has deserted us," said the baillie. "I wadna ha' lost him if I could help it, for he's as useful as a collie dog in these forsaken regions."

"Perhaps he has gone on ahead and will turn up presently."

"I canna tell. There is something so canny about these Highlanders. I have made the venture to her on your business, Mr. Osbaldistone, but I could wish mascal at home again."

Frank assured the baillie that he was very much obliged to him for his kindness, and that he hoped sincerely that he would suffer no harm from his good nature. At the same time he took the opportunity to hint that Rob Roy had promised to pay his kinsman the thousand pounds he had borrowed from him, and that the inducement of getting it back might have had something to do with the journey into the lawless districts in which they found themselves.

"That's a' richt enough," answered the baillie. "But I have sair misgivin that I'll never see any o' my bonnie punks Scots. Rob is a weel meaning fellow, but he's nae sae honest as he might be."

"I should have thought he was the soul of honour in his transactions with friends."

"Na, na."

"He gave me the impression of being so."

"Rob has hae much to try him," exclaimed the baillie. "He was ance an honest man, but the government troops suspect him and harried his farm, when he was away selling and buying cattle. They burnt his house o'er his wife's head and turned her and her bairns out into the snow."

"What was that for?" asked Frank.

"Ye'd better ask the Duke of Argyll, he's a Campbell, yet he's one of those men who run wi' the hare and hunt wi' the hounds a' cawmell, as they ca' him; is always more or less treacherous, generally more."

"Then, I am to suppose, that Rob's wife is no friend to the government."

"Ye may weel say that. Helen Macgregor is a woman who wad burn a redcoat at the stake, and hang an Englishman if she had the chance."

"That is not a very pleasant outlook for us."

"Aweel," said the baillie, with a sigh, "I ha'e done guid to Rob, and it's not for ha' sin flesh and bluid to go against me."

The picture he drew of Mrs. Macgregor was not very encouraging to Frank, but he had commenced the journey and he was not going to draw back. Yet as they proceeded on their way he could not help feeling some sense of misgiving, for the disappearance of Dougal, without a word of explanation, was not calculated to reassure him. They were in a wild and lawless country, where the laws were neither respected or enforced, and in consequence they had to rely on their own courage and skill with their swords for defence in the event of any attack being made upon them.

Teeminutes' ride brought them to the entrance to the valley which rejoiced in the romantic name of the clachan of Aberfoyle. The first house was the inn, which indeed more resembled a hotel than the houses which in those days have good cheer for man and beast. Lights shone in the windows and the sound of voices, as if raised in altercation or loud discussion, were heard proceeding from the interior. Andrew rode up and reconnoitred; he did not appear to like the look of the place at all and begged his master not to enter.

"Why should we not enter?" asked Frank; "an inn should have a welcome for everyone."

"Your honour is in the Hielands," replied Andrew. "Mebbe some of the chiefs of the clans are birling o'er their usquebaugh, an' they will not like it that a Sassenach gentleman like your ainsel' should disturb them."

"I don't care for all the chiefs in the Highlands," answered Frank. "I'm hungry and tired. If there is good cheer in the house to be had for love or money I'll have it."

"You'll get cauld steel in your whame, mair likely."

"Hold your tongue, you insolent rascal!" cried Frank.

"Oh, I'll hauld me tongue, but I've warned you. I may be a gowk, but I've some reason for what I say," replied Andrew, crossly.

At the sound of the horses' feet a half clad boy came out of the inn and stared rudely at the strangers.

"Call the ostler," exclaimed Frank.

"Ah! neil Sassenach," replied the boy.

"I'll warrant if I gie you a baubee you'll find some English," said the baillie.

He handed him a coin, which worked a magical effect.

"Mither! mither!" cried the lad. "Here been some Sassenach shentlemans, and they want ye. Gang alang, mammy. They ha'e braw siller in their sporran. There are twa o' them, an' wad speak wi' ye."

It was wonderful how the boy spoke English when he had some money given him. In a few seconds the landlady made her appearance. She was a wild, rough-looking woman, and held in her hand a pine wood torch, by the light of which she carefully scrutinised the travellers, the result of her examination not seeming to be very satisfactory, as she informed them that she had no accommodation for them, her house being engaged by some Highland gentlemen.

"Do you mean to say that you refuse to give us food and shelter?" inquired Frank.

"You can ha'e none here," she rejoined. "You cannae fare want if you gang further."

"That's absurd," continued Frank. "We ha'e travelled from Glasgow, and are both tired and hungry. We might wander about all night before we found another place, so send us something of your best, and that quickly."

The woman was about to make some further remark, but Frank cut her short by throwing his bridle to Andrew, an example which was speedily followed by the baillie. They dismounted, and Andrew took the beasts to a hut dignified by the name of stable.

"Keep your hand on your sword, Mr. Osbaldistone," said Nicoll Jarvie. "These Hieland chielis are kittle cattle, and wad as soon fight as eat."

"I am not afraid of them," replied Frank.

The baillie did not seem to pride himself much on his own prowess, and evidently relied on the skill of his companion in the event of any disturbance taking place.

"Aweel, aweel," muttered the hostess; "their bluid be on their own heads. Galbraith of Enrich and that daft gallant Invershalloch will not bide to be bullied by a Sassenach and a puir Glasgow body when they're full of beef and brandy."

Entering the house, they paused a moment at the door of a room, as if hesitating which way to go.

"I tell you, Galbraith," said a voice, "that I dinna care a snap o' the fingers for any Campbell or them a', an' ye may tell that to Macmillan More."

"Hootaws, Invershalloch," replied Galbraith. "I ha'e nae mair fear than yousel' o' the cau-mills, but ye ken that this Rob Roy is in a way under the protection of the Duke of Argyll."

"He may be, but his time has come. We are here to meet the militia, and will hunt him down like a dog. He has harried the countryside lang enough."

"Truth," said Galbraith, "he shall burn no mair barns of mine, nor lift my kine, either."

The baillie touched Frank lightly on the shoulder.

"They're after Rob," he remarked, "and it will go hard with him if he is caught."

"That is bad news," replied Frank, "for we were to meet The Macgregor here."

"I ken that daft body Galbraith," continued the baillie, "he's owing me aill the noo. Let us make entry and get it o'er."

Frank pushed the door open without knocking and by the aid of a dingy lamp beheld two tall, strong kilted Highlanders, with their targets and swords by their sides, seated at a table on which was a flask of usquebaugh and two glasses. Stretched before the fire, wrapped in his plaid and apparently asleep, was a third Highlander.

Frank and the baillie sat down on two empty chairs and looked about them anxiously.

"Upon my word, gentlemen," exclaimed Galbraith, "you make yourselves at home."

"I always do," replied Frank, "and as this is a public inn I do not see the necessity for asking your's or any other person's permission."

Galbraith of Enrich sprang to his feet as did his friend.

"Did you hear that, Invershalloch?" he cried.

"As I live by bread that is an insult to the baith of us. This room is preoccupied by us and these idle loons think they can force their company on us, whether we will or no."

"I have no wish to do so," replied Frank, "we only want rest and refreshment."

"Then in the deil's name get it elsewhere."

"I have already told you, I do not choose to do so."

The two Highlanders grasped their swords and advanced to the new comers, who put themselves on the defensive. Frank's sword quickly leapt from its scabbard, but the baillie was not so fortunate in extricating his, as it was very rusty and stuck fast.

Seeing Invershalloch coming at him, sniffing the battle afar off like a war horse, he seized a large bar of iron which was used for stirring up the fire. It was red hot and he began to fence and ward off his adversary's thrusts with it. Not wishing to hurt the Highlander if he could help it, Frank contented himself by acting on the defensive and successfully parried his vigorous blows.

The baillie fought manfully, and being pressed into a corner, made a desperate lunge at Invershalloch which touched his plaid, setting it on fire. Seeing himself enveloped in flames, the affrighted Highlander dropped his sword and target to engage in the task of extinguishing himself.

"Oigh, oigh!" he cried. "Did ever anyone see the like of that? He will nae fight like a shentlemans but must try to burn a mon."

Suddenly the sleeping man jumped up, and displaying a dirk, flourished it in the air as he threw himself before Invershalloch.

"By the cross of Glasgow," he exclaimed, "she'll fight for Mr. Osbaldistone and Nicoll Sharvie."

Galbraith lowered his rapier.

"What?" he said, "is one of these gentlemen Nicoll Jarvie of the Saut Market? Nay, then we have done eneuch. I'll cross swords no mair; they ha'e shown their spirit, and honour is satisfied."

The one who had interfered was apparently satisfied with the result, for he had hastily quitted the apartment, but not before Frank had caught a glimpse of his face and found that it was Dougal. What the creature was doing there was a matter of conjecture, probably, Frank thought, Rob Roy, his master, was not far off.

"Are you satisfied, sir?" asked Galbraith.

"Perfectly," replied Frank, "let us cement a peace in a stoup of claret or brandy."

"You may be satisfied," said Invershalloch, who had put out the fire and was looking ruefully at a big hole in his plaid, "but where am I to get another plaid? Phew! how it smells. It's worse than a singed sheep's head. It's a pity a man cannae fight wi' his sword like a shentlemans."

"You shall ha'e a new plaid," replied the baillie, "and Nicoll Jarvie will pay for it; as for my sword, it was nae fault o' mine, for the thing stickeed sae, it wad nae come out."

Galbraith extended his hand to the baillie.

"To think that I suld not have known my old friend Nicoll Jarvie," he said. "But there's no bluid spilled and no bones broken; sit down and ca' for the liquor."

All four took their places at the table.

(To be Continued.)

THE PANTOMIMES.

DRURY LANE THEATRE.

The familiar story of "Blue Beard" will render our readers prepared to hear that the lovely sisters Fatima and Anne have a needy parent, but on the present occasion it is a male one. When the curtain rises he is being dunned by his creditors, in the form of his labourers, headed by Rustifusti, foreman of the farm, for Ibrahim, the male parent in question, suffers from agricultural difficulties. He in vain tries to conciliate his people with mild words, and sings a song telling them to "chalk it up," but without any good result. In a concerted piece, in which the Great Bashaw sings his own March and receives the adulation of the populace, Blue Beard urges Fatima to accept him as a husband, but she affirms herself true to her mariner. The father and Bluebeard invent a falsehood about Selim having been wrecked; but Sister Anne, accompanied by her lover, Ali Sloper, brings in a present from Selim, and a letter informing Fatima that he will be home that night. Thus perplexed, Bluebeard resolves to use the magic spell commanded by the words Hey, Cockalorum, to rouse the demons of the storm, and, getting on their mules, he and Sbacabac take their departure.

The next scene takes us to a caravansary on the coast, where Selim is reposing after his fatigues. Bluebeard proponds a wonderful remedy, putting in poison unseen by others. He then asks for Fatima, and tries to carry her off, but Selim defends her, when Bluebeard repeating the magic words, causes the other dramatic persons to disappear, and left alone with Fatima he bears her to the Cave of Mystery, gets her entangled in the Silver Web, places a ring upon her finger, and as he bestows a kiss upon the insensible girl the stage is filled with Sylphs, and a grand ballet of Fascination is performed.

The opening ballet, with the girls dressed in red and green, was a sign of the taste to be displayed afterwards. The advent of Bluebeard soon after with his colossal Black Guards, preceded by female soldiers in yellow tunics and brightly spangled tights, the big property elephant upon which the Bashaw sits when he makes his entrance, not to speak of the smaller one, which is really an important help to the fun of the piece, was but an instalment of what was soon to be paid in full. The ballet that occurs after the entanglement of Fatima in the Silver Web reached the climax of display of profuse elegance. The ballet ladies dressed in pink bodies and net skirts, with silver lace, danced before a scene of variegated flowers, festoons of blossoms descending from the flies. The second dance with hoops, from which hung fringe and bells, was most elegant in its effect; and as we are speaking of the ballet we may at this moment pass our warm praises upon Madlle. Palladino, the premiere danseuse.

The transformation that begins in the region of ice, in which a human face is fancifully designed, breaks away, displaying a Robin perched upon a horizontal bough, a figurante reclining at each side of this charming picture; this in turn opens when we see brightly dressed female forms on each side, interspersed with branches bearing golden bell-shaped blossoms, the centre at the back showing ladies in front of a large Chaplet of Wheatears, which opens also to disclose fresh forms of loveliness, while from the flies descend, some solitary, others in a group, numerous figurantes, making a picture of beauty that the lusty plaudits of the crowded audience could not pay in full. The scenery is all good and appropriate, the Sea by Moonlight having

a wonderful effect of solitariness by the aid of a distant rock and the wing pieces.

COVENT GARDEN THEATRE.

"SINDBAD THE SAILOR" has been many a time and oft made the subject of Pantomime writers, and it may be said that Mr. Frank Green has exercised his wits in very happy fashion, introducing puns, and topical allusions, and songs in a style that shows he is no novice in his work. Scene one shows us the Web of Witchery, with Aphrohara, the Fairy Fiend, amongst the Spiders she has subdued. Wishing to check all adventurous spirits and to stay the march of progress, she objects to Sindbad undertaking his voyages of discovery, and, hearing that he about to start upon one of his expeditions from Bagdad, departs in her fairy chariot in order to prevent him. Her plotting is, however, overheard by Cupid, who is reclining among the roses, and who flies on the wings of love to foil her plans. In scene two we see the Port of Bagdad, with the good ship Battledore preparing for her voyage.

Scene three represents the Battledore very much at sea; and in scene four, through the combination of Thunder, Lightning, Wind, and Rain, who are summoned to the aid of the fairy, the good ship sinks on the oyster reef "twenty thousand leagues under the sea." Here Cupid turns up to the rescue with a diving bell. Cupid guides the vessel to scene six, the Big Roc's Nest, where the Man of the Sea, faithful to the story, nearly brings Sindbad to grief. Roc ultimately flies off with Sindbad and the Captain to the Diamond Valley, which we see in scene seven. Here we view a grand procession of the Court of the King and Queen of the Valley of Diamonds. In scene eight, which shows us the head of the modern Memnon on the borders of the scientific frontier, we hear the oracle consulted by Sindbad and his friends, who are now anxious to return. The irrepressible fairy fiend endeavours once more to accomplish their destruction, but is prevented by Cupid, who wafts everybody through the clouds to the grand Transformation of a Christmas Card.

The sailing of the good ship Battledore is a stage effect calling for hearty applause, and getting it; and on the oyster reef, where the vessel ultimately settles, the properties representative of the wonders of the deep are not to be passed by without commendatory notice. The grand ballet is prettily arranged, the dancers, who carry coral branches, going through their task in pleasing fashion. The transformation is another thing of beauty, and will be a joy—if not for ever, yet until the Pantomime season comes to an end.

ALHAMBRA THEATRE.

"ROTHOMAGO; OR, THE MAGIC WATCH," with no less than three ballets of considerable length, could not be got through in a hurry. Mr. H. B. Farnie is responsible for adapting and arranging "Rothomago" for the English Stage, and he has done his work with ability, and has satisfied the requirements of an Alhambra audience in every respect, for there is an abundance of the elements which attract visitors to this establishment. The scenery is of a very brilliant and, in some instances, of quite a novel kind, and the mechanical effects equal the best devices introduced in any of the pantomimes.

The pleasure of the audience was expressed in the most emphatic manner. The first ballet ended with a grand tableau, the Triumph of Bacchus, which was slightly robbed of its effect by the intense fog; but upon a clearer night it will, we are certain, be an attractive feature. The next act reveals to us another magical change, for, unlike a pantomime, which introduces but one Transformation Scene, there is a transformation in every act of "Rothomago," and the second of these is to a Snowy Forest in Freezeland, where the Court of King Dodo arrives in a very chilly state.

The party is surprised by a number of bears,

but they escape in a balloon, another capital scene of changes and clever contrivances taking place, the balloon coming to earth in Egypt, within sight of the pyramids, an opportunity for one of the most magnificent ballets ever produced at this establishment. It is truly "a dream of ancient Egypt," and as Dodo once more forgets to wind up the magic watch a magical change takes place of the most marvellous character. Groups of Egyptian Mummies rise from their tombs, and in fantastic groups fill the vast stage to celebrate the festival of Memnon. There is an almost classical taste displayed in the arrangement of this ballet, and in the care taken to make the costumes of the dancers accord with the period chosen, while the blazing splendour of the rising sun is supposed to awaken the powers of Memnon, and tinges the mystic groups of figures and the gigantic forms of the pyramids.

It is impossible not to admire the ingenuity and knowledge displayed in getting up such a scene, which almost reminds the spectator of one of Mr. Long's beautiful pictures of the times of the Pharaohs. Nothing has ever been more perfectly carried out, and the costumes in many instances exactly correspond with the carvings and paintings upon the monuments and temples of the Nile. It is impossible to give this ballet greater praise than it deserves, and we anticipate it will be the most striking feature in the piece.

In the last ballet Madlle. Roselli, a new danseuse, won great favour, and the ballet is altogether a very attractive item in the long entertainment. We have said enough to show that Mr. Morton has displayed his usual enterprise in producing so splendid a production for his Christmas patrons, and we are convinced that "Rothomago" will prove one of the most successful pieces of the holiday season.

SURREY THEATRE.

The subject chosen is "Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp," the customary supplementary title being "Harlequin the Wicked Wizard and the good Genii of the Enchanted Cave." After the grand fairy ballet the lone lone one in the Widow's Cottage is disgusted by the "breach of promise" of the Magician, and she suggests the sale of the wonderful lamp, which, being rubbed up in order to enhance its value, brings upon the scene the pretty Luminosa, who at once provides a sumptuous banquet, and, by way of dessert, a number of precious gems, which our hero determines to send as a present to the fair princess. In scene the seventh we are witnesses of the despair of the emperor, whose daughter has refused the Grand Vizier, to whom he is under certain pecuniary obligations. The princess swears she will wed none but Aladdin, and when the happy event is about to be celebrated there is carried out in its honour a grand Eastern ballet, also arranged by Mr. Paul Valentine, and terminating with something patriotic in the way.

The Transformation Scene is of the most elaborate character. Its title is "Love and Hope, or the Dream of Alciphron." Argument: Once upon a time Alciphron, an Arab Prince, being overcome by sleep in a thickly-tangled wood, dreamed of the delights which should attend the journey of his true betrothed Zorilda. He dreamed that she has embarked upon the "Ship of the Desert," and the camel bells are heard ringing. The scene is immediately transformed by a blinding sand-storm, through which Zorilda has reached the banks of the Sacred Nile. Her vessel upon the rushing tide is tossed about, and sinks; when in the sky appears the presage of Hope, the Southern Cross, at which happy augury the scene changes to a delightful oasis. After many days' search up the sinuous course of the Nile, Alciphron finds his beloved near the source of that wondrous river in a bower of blissful beauty, enhanced by Nature's choicest gifts.

NEW SADLER'S WELLS THEATRE.

The first performance of the grand new pantomime of "The Forty Thieves; or Abdallah's 'Arrays," went almost without hitch or wait from beginning to end. Written by Mr. Weemore, the dialogue is up to the usual pantomime standard, and contains the average amount and quality of puns and allusions to passing events. The Crystal Caves of the Glittering Dewdrops, in scene three, is a charming scene, introducing a bevy of ballerines, who go through some graceful and intricate evolutions. Scene four shows the love-making of Cassim and Morgiana, also of a couple of feline ones, an incident which evoked much laughter, but it is in scene five, a Flat in Bagdad, that occurs the chief attraction of the entertainment.

Here Ali Baba's wife, Cogin Baba, is engaged in putting to bed, washing, and otherwise performing sundry maternal duties to a baker's round dozen of children, of which she and Ali Baba are the proud possessors. These juveniles enter upon their stage business with a brightness and verve which speak not only of careful tuition, but of enjoyment of the task; and one of them, "Little Nellie," a small woman of some five or six summers, approaches very nearly in genuine fun and humour to the now celebrated "Pinafore" children, a song wherein she reproaches her mother, "You have beat us black and blue," obtaining a double encore.

Scene six takes us back to the wood again, where there is some clever character dancing, in which Mokanna, the faithful donkey, performs a prominent part; and then we come to the Tropical Forest, where the Forty Thieves, arrayed in dazzling armour, go through various military manœuvres, and on the arrival of the Princess Real, borne in a palanquin by four hideous negroes, plunder but do not otherwise ill-treat her. From this point, and through scenes eight and nine, the plot pursues its way with tolerable fidelity to the "Arabian Nights" story, and the "Open Sesame" episode of the cavern, the killing of Cassim Baba, the sewing on of his head by an Irish cobbler, Mustapha O'Wax, the introduction of the Forty Thieves concealed in oil jars into Ali Baba's court-yard, their destruction by Morgiana with the boiling oil, and the capture of the Captain and Lieutenant of the band bring us to scene ten—a Law Court, where the background, representing a huge web, wherein lie in wait for their victims two gigantic spiders, is supposed to be symbolical of "The Meshes of the Law." The Harlequinade contains some clever tricks and good stage business, to say nothing of "A Shadow Pantomime," Mr. C. Richards being a bright and nimble Harlequin.

CRYSTAL PALACE.

The pantomime is called "Jack the Giant Killer; or, Harlequin Fairy Spiteful, Good King Arthur, and the Knights of the Round Table." Practical comicalities abound, and the incidents are liberally diversified by song and dance. Gymnastics and broad humour are supplied by Messrs. Edmonds, Fritz, and Albert. Miss Emily Muir is pre-eminent in the vocal displays, and nimble Miss Lizzie Coote as the giant-killing Jack is at hand for the jigs and hornpipes. The pantomime opens in Zodiac Hall, where the representatives of the weather, with their monarch, King Weathercock, are persuaded by the Fairy Spiteful—a resplendent personage clad in black and gold—to lend their aid to her son Gorgibuster in carrying off Sybil. The next scene, a charming rural view, shows us the exterior of the village inn with landscape beyond, and we quickly learn that the terror of the peasants at Gorgibuster's ferocious and predatory habits is warranted by his personal appearance. The giant is capitally "made up," for although he is nine or ten feet in height, there is none of that awkwardness or difficulty in moving his limbs so often seen under similar circumstances, and when the actor, Mr. Clifford, wields his heavy club, he seems to have command of quite half the stage. This scene is full of pantomimic bustle. On his way to the giant's abode, Jack

is met by the fairy Spiteful, and accepts the offer of a friendly cup of tea. He is taken to the malevolent being's "Fiery Palace," where amid lurid light a bevy of beautiful demons vainly attempt to fascinate Jack. This is the "ballet scene" of the pantomime, and contains some excellent grouping. Escaping from female wiles, Jack resumes his mission, being presented on the way by his good genius with magical shoes and sword. Then comes the transformation in a series of scenes allegorical of "Our Empire in the East." Painted elephants bearing palanquins with human figures, occupy a prominent place in the various tableaux, and when the culmination is reached, the centre of the stage is filled with a revolving pedestal on which are fairies in silver armour, bearing a globe, whilst in the rear is a gigantic golden wheel. The scene is oriental, and for effect could scarcely be exceeded.

STANDARD THEATRE.

The pantomimes here have for many years equalled the West-end establishments. "Blue Beard Re-Wived" is by Mr. John Douglass, who has imparted some novelty to the subject whilst retaining the spirit of the original. The pantomime opens "Amongst the Mountain Peaks," where Selim is shown Fatima as in a vision, and determines to win her, despite the powerful rivalry of Blue Beard. Fatima and Sister Anne are the daughters of Mustapha, a hair-cutter, to whose establishment the scene is soon transferred. In a grand procession and review of Blue Beard's army there are some highly-effective evolutions by Amazons, the leader being Mademoiselle Sidonie. In the fourth scene Blue Beard brings his bride home, and gives her his keys with the famous prohibition against entering the Blue Chamber. The principal genii of the Blue Chamber are Mdlle. Sidonie and Madame Laura Ferri, but the scene is admirably rendered by all concerned. On Blue Beard's return he asks Fatima for the key, and when he finds that she has neglected his commands, her death appears imminent. Sister Anne and Ketcho look out for the rescuing party, and just when it seems fruitless to longer hope, Selim arrives, the castle is stormed, and after another scene showing the further discomfiture of the tyrannical Turk, we arrive at Mr. Richard Douglass's gorgeous transformation scene, embracing a succession of beautiful changes and brilliant effects of coloured lights. The scenery is throughout very picturesque, while the costumes are rich and fanciful.

GRECIAN THEATRE.

"ROKOKO, THE ROCK FIEND," is the pantomime at this theatre, by Messrs. George Conquest and H. Spy, who have supplied the Christmas entertainments here for twenty-two years, and the representation derives considerable attractiveness from the appearance of Mr. George Conquest and his son in some of their acrobatic scenes. Scene the first discloses "The Toadstool Valley," where King Toad is surrounded by his courtiers, and whither comes King Moth; and their interchange of defiance is followed by the arrival of the Enchanted Duck, who apparently has an important connection with the plot. The colossal and peculiarly significant wink with which she is endowed excited the greatest amusement. We are taken to King Muddler's Palace, and now it appears that his Majesty is cursed with all the ills that flesh is heir to in consequence of his having shot the Enchanted Duck. The palace and gardens form exceedingly fine sets, the costumes of the pages and maids-in-waiting adding greatly to the brilliancy of the whole. The Insect Haunt in Fairyland next opens upon the view, and this is a really charming picture, gaining for the artist an enthusiastic call. At the conclusion of a ballet Rokoko turns up again in an enchanted forest, and for his tumultuous enmity to the prince is changed by King Moth into a tree. The transformation scene was perfectly successful, and the harlequinade efficient.

MADAME TUSSAUD'S.—An equestrian group, illustrating the death of the Prince Imperial, has been added during the week, and has attracted much attention. It is a carefully executed work, and apart from the interest of the subject, is notable as being the first equestrian model shown in the Baker Street galleries.

THE FORCED MARRIAGE;

—OR—

JEW AND GENTILE.

CHAPTER XVIII.

MRS. MARKHAM did not reply to her mistress's last words, but after the dog's wounds were dressed she again urged her companion to retire; and, indeed, the necessity for doing so was great, for the young girl had greatly overtaxed her feeble strength.

Early the next morning Rachael Aveling arose, and with determined purpose, yet nervous fingers, prepared to quit Ashurst for ever. She felt that her stay in that ill-starred, ill-assorted household was no longer possible, as from the beginning it had been ill-advised and well nigh fatal.

She had few preparations to make, her possessions being so few; consequently, when her slight breakfast was despatched, she was quite ready to go forth. There were no leave-takings to be gone through with, no last words to be said, no regrets to stifle, no anticipations and promises of return.

The distance to the hospital, towards which she was determined to direct her steps, was not so great but that she felt she could traverse it without aid, for this morning she felt wonderfully invigorated and strengthened; she even felt that she was about gaining a freedom which had never before been hers.

She tied on her hat and wrapped herself well in her shawl. The morning was clear and bright, with that bracing quality in the air which boded no injury to invalids sallying forth for the first time in many weeks.

Rachael beckoned Pluto, opened the door and left the room. The dog followed, walking painfully, yet bravely, for every step irritated the grievous wound in his side.

Rachael was not sorry when, reaching the outer door of the house, she met Upton, for she did not wish him to think that she was leaving surreptitiously, neither did she wish to seek a parting interview with him.

At first he seemed inclined to pass without any recognition except an angry frown and a short good-morning, but Rachael, obeying a generous impulse, accosted him:

"I must bid you good-bye as well as good-morning, Mr. Upton," she said. "I am leaving Ashurst for ever."

He turned quickly round.

"So," he replied, "you are really going?"

"I am."

He paused a moment, looking intently and scowlingly into her face.

"Are you aware that you endanger any claim you may have upon your husband's estate by taking such a step?"

"That is a matter of entire indifference to me," she replied. "I consider that I have no interest whatever in my husband's estate."

Upton raised his eyebrows incredulously.

"Would you be willing to prove your sincerity by signing certain papers relinquishing your so-called rights?" he asked, with difficulty repressing the eagerness which he felt.

"By no means," she answered, "When my simple word is doubted I never take any pains to prove it. Besides, common sense, I think, would teach one to beware of signing papers whose import one did not thoroughly understand."

Ruffed in this crafty endeavour, Upton turned furiously toward the dog, which he now seemed to notice for the first time.

"Madame!" he angrily exclaimed, "what is the meaning of this? Last night I ordered that dangerous brute to be shot. You and Mrs. Markham, I am told, interfered; and now you bring the creature into my very presence for the purpose, without doubt, of again setting him at my throat."

"Mr. Upton," replied Rachael, resolutely, "I shall always interfere to prevent cruelty wherever I see it. I shall always defend my own property, and I shall always protect my friends."

Upton laughed sneeringly.

"Your friends are well chosen!" he retorted; and in the excess of his spleen and baffled vengeance he raised his foot to give the dog a vicious kick, but the animal was ready for him, and the gleaming white teeth warned the cowardly Upton to beware how he provoked his enemy of the day before to open hostility.

So, with another sneer and a muttered threat, which Rachael did not hear, the dastardly master of Ashurst turned upon his heel and walked away. But a welcome surprise awaited the young lady ere she passed the limits of the estate; for hearing her name called, she looked behind her, and saw the housekeeper hurrying after her.

At first Rachael thought that the kind-hearted woman was following to urge her return; but this idea was abandoned as upon a nearer approach Rachael noticed that the housekeeper was arrayed in her best outdoor attire, and that she carried a bundle of goodly size in her arms. She was breathless with the speed she had made when she finally reached Rachael's side.

"Well, my dear, you and I are going off to seek our fortunes together, after all," she said.

"Indeed, Mrs. Markham! Then you have also decided to leave Ashurst?"

"It's none of my deciding, my dear," the woman replied. "I'm turned away."

"Turned away? And for what, pray?"

"Oh, for what, indeed!" exclaimed the ex-housekeeper, impatiently. "For what, indeed, but because Thomas must needs go with some prattling tale about the dog to Mr. Upton, and Mr. Mark calls me into the library this morning to give me a going on over my disobedience, and when I told him for the life of me I couldn't help doing the same thing again if I was so positioned, he up and gave me a week's notice, and that riled me so I told him I wouldn't stay the week out, but would go that very morning, which I did, ma'am, and now I wonder who'll see his omelettes is cooked as he likes 'em, and who'll stuff his fowls in the way he's so particular about?"

"But my good Mrs. Markham, what are you going to do now?"

"La, ma'am, I'm going with you to the hospital. The people over there know what a good nurse I am, and when the house yonder was burnt the superintendent sent me word that if I was thrown out of my place he would give me a good situation over there. I didn't say anything to you about the offer yesterday, because I thought, maybe, you'd give up going yourself; but as things have turned out, this chance at the hospital is what I call providential."

"Then Mrs. Markham, perhaps you can secure a place for me there also," said Rachael eagerly. "I could tend the sick very carefully; I could do great many things to make myself useful. You think they will receive me, don't you?"

"Well, my dear, we'll see. There's no use saying a thing will surely happen when perhaps it won't, but I'll say a good word for you and we'll hope for the best."

The great shaggy dog at this moment came forward, and by mute signs testified his desire to carry the bundle which the housekeeper bore, a mark of favour which Rachael, in their long walks, allowed him. He took it in his mouth, as if he understood what their destination was to be, and the three wayfarers, for which they felt themselves to be, wended their way toward Custer's Bridge and to the large red brick building beyond.

It was a singular group which stood upon the porch of Theobald's Hospital that bright winter

morning waiting for their ring at the door to be answered.

The portly housekeeper, breathless from the unusual exercise she had taken, the slender, beautiful young girl, made still more beautiful by that bracing, frosty air, and the large dog standing beside them seeming to mount guard over the sizable bundle he had brought.

While waiting for the door to be opened, a brief colloquy took place between the two members of the group first named.

"No, Mrs. Markham," said Rachael. "I must seriously beg of you not to mention the name by which of late I have been known. In leaving Ashurst I hope to have left behind me everything which connects me with the place, so I cannot consent to longer retain the name of Aveling. It was forced upon me; it will serve no good purpose were I to retain it; and although this desire of mine may be a mere whim, yet I think I may gratify it without harm."

"Well, ma'am," returned the elder woman, after a moment's reflection, "perhaps you are right, after all. I've lived at Ashurst a great many years, long enough to know a deal about the family. I knew the last Aveling, Mr. Edard's mother, and a sweeter lady never lived. I knew Mr. Aveling, the father, too, and though they were always good and kind to me, they had some very high notions about themselves and their family. I do believe they would turn in disgust in their graves if they knew that one of their name left Ashurst to apply for a nurse's place in a hospital. So, for the sake of the dead, ma'am, as well as to pleasure your own harmless whimsies, I think you'd better drop the Aveling and try some other name."

Their further conversation was cut short by the opening of the door and by their entering the house. They were ushered into a small reception room, where at Mrs. Markham's desire, they were presently met by the superintendent.

The housekeeper, who took upon herself the office of spokeswoman speedily made known her errand. Her own qualifications being, as she truthfully said, well-known in the neighbourhood, she was readily admitted to the position she desired, there being just then a decided lack of skilled assistants.

"But, my good woman," said the official, turning toward Rachael and the dog, "I scarcely know what to say to your companion. Our charter does not permit us to receive invalid animals," and he smiled as he pointed to the dog.

"Yet, I hope you'll suffer him to remain, sir," replied the woman. "Mr. Upton, at Ashurst, took a dislike to the fellow and so tried to have him shot, but this young lady and I interfered, which so angered Mr. Mark that he sent me away, and that's how I happened to come here at all."

"Well, Mrs. Markham, as our need of competent nurses is very great at the present time, perhaps we ought to give the dog a home out of gratitude for his being the cause of your coming; but what shall we say to this young woman?"

And the gentleman turned his eyes inquiringly upon Rachael.

"I can understand your dilemma," returned the young girl, answering for herself. "I am far from being what one might call a person of experience in a sick-room, yet I think I may be of some service in a convalescent ward. I have just recovered from a painful illness myself, so I think I have gained some knowledge by experience."

The superintendent seemed struck by the force of her reply, and after a few moments, during which he seemed making a mental estimate of the young applicant's ability, he said.

"I think I will try you for a few days in the convalescent ward, that is if Mrs. Markham can give me an assurance of your general good character."

The housekeeper smiled and opened her lips to render a more diffuse assurance than the case

required, but Rachael stopped her by a sign, so that she merely replied:

"I can answer for her entirely, sir. She is not an ordinary person at all, sir. Indeed, I think she might recommend herself higher than she has done, and still fall short of the truth."

This statement proving entirely satisfactory, a few more preliminaries were arranged, and then the two new nurses were conducted to the rooms which were assigned them, and at their urgent request the dog was allowed a rug outside their door. This last favour, a great infringement of the rules, would not, perhaps, have been granted if the superintendent had not whispered to one of the other officers of the house:

"The poor brute was sentenced to death by Upton, over there at Ashurst, and was rescued by his mistress. A creature, man or beast, whom Upton hates must have some transcendent good in him, so we'll keep the dog and take care of him."

"Yes," returned the other. "Upton is running a wild course since his cousin died. By the way, have you heard that he is going to marry Aveling's widow?"

"No; can that be true?"

"So they say."

"Well, then, all I have to say is that they're a precious pair. One would think that the horror of Aveling's death would keep them within the bounds of propriety, if not of decency; but, then, it's foolish to expect anything of the sort from Upton."

Later in the day Rachael and Mrs. Markham were inducted into office, that is, under the guidance of one of the physicians they were assigned their wards and instructed as to their duties.

Their respective posts being quite remote one from the other, and no communication between the two being permitted, it resulted that the new attendants saw little or nothing of each other during the day; it was only at night, and then when off duty, that they had an opportunity of uninterrupted intercourse.

By common inference it was understood that Rachael was a relative of the old housekeeper from Ashurst, and it fell out, by what chance it would be difficult to say, that she came to be called "Sister Felicia."

Although Sister Felicia received her appointment in the hospital with joy, it was with no little trepidation that she entered upon her duties. Her first trust was to wait upon a child, a boy, who, having met with an accident which made the amputation of one of his limbs necessary, was then approaching convalescence, yet his condition was still so serious that he required unremitting care.

Near to the bed which the lad occupied was another, tenanted by a young or middle-aged man. Rachael really could not tell which, his face being marked by deep lines of suffering which only years of bitter experience could produce, though his complexion and hair betokened a certain degree of youthfulness.

There was something about this man which, from the first, attracted Rachael's attention, so haggard, so hopeless was his countenance; so mournful the expression which had fixed itself upon his mouth and settled in his eyes. Emaciated to a degree scarcely credible, listless almost to torpidity, Rachael wondered how so miserable, so utterly wretched a being should be placed among the convalescents, for to her eyes he seemed about sinking into the grave, or worse still, into hopeless melancholia.

Her heart was touched with pity for the abject being, and during those intervals when the lad under her care did not require her attention she strove to arouse the sick man's interest, or to win him from the brooding fancies which distressed her even to behold.

The man at first resisted her attempts in his behalf. Lying silent and pale, with his eyes half closed, a frown would gather upon his face if Rachael touched his hand to attract his attention toward the medicines or the food she offered him. But at length it seemed as though there was something in her presence, in the touch of her

hand as she smoothed his pillows or brushed the long damp hair from his pale forehead which aroused him from his apathy.

He opened his eyes and looked at the lovely face framed in the snowy nurse's cap; he seemed to be faintly conscious of some comforting reassurance in the large soft eyes looking down so kindly into his own, and when the beautiful lips parted in a smile, showing the pearly teeth, when he heard the sweet, winning voice persuading him to make one more effort to taste the strengthening mixture which she held to his lips, he instinctively obeyed and drained the cup to its last dregs.

Then the gentle nurse, replacing the invalid's head upon the pillow from which she had raised it, would smooth the counterpane comfortably, arrange the cool linen across the sufferer's breast and then return to her place beside the sick boy.

She did not notice that as she ministered to the lad the eyes of the other invalid followed her every moment. He seemed to have been awakened to a slight interest in surrounding objects, and when his eyelids next fell it was in quiet, refreshing sleep, and not into that listless, apathetic slumber so discouraging to physician and attendant.

The doctor, going his rounds, noted the change in the man. He observed with satisfaction how defily, tenderly, and skilfully the new nurse fulfilled her duties; and several days later, when Rachael left the ward for the night, she was summoned to a conference with Dr. Anderson in his office.

"Sister Felicia," he said, addressing her by the only name by which she was known, "I think you may be the means of aiding us in a very perplexing case."

"I certainly hope I may be so fortunate," she replied.

"I have been very much encouraged by the improvement in Mr. Saunders since you have been here," he went on. "His case has been a very obstinate one—I may say, a very perplexing one indeed—but probably I see a decided improvement."

"Do you allude to the poor gentleman whose bed is next that of my little boy?" she asked.

"Yes, I allude to Mr. Saunders. He properly belongs in another ward, but was placed among the convalescents to see if such a change would not arouse him from the sad state into which he has fallen. I almost despaired of any good resulting from the removal, and was about having him taken back to the insane ward from which he came, but if you will keep on interesting and amusing him I think I'll leave him where he is awhile longer."

"Oh, pray do so," returned Rachael. "If you think I am doing him any good I shall be only too happy to wait upon him; for his sad face grieves me beyond measure. Some terrible sorrow seems to be weighing upon his mind."

The doctor shook his head.

"It is a very sad case, indeed," he said. "He has been here about six weeks or two months. Yes, it's just six weeks, for he arrived the night before Ashurst was burnt; I remember, and that was six weeks ago, was it not?"

"Six weeks today," said the doctor.

"Well, then, it was six weeks ago yesterday that he was brought here by his friends—insane."

"Ah, insane!" repeated Rachael. "How extremely sad!"

"Yes, insane; made so by the loss of his wife and child, who both went down in that terrible 'Schiller' disaster. He was a raving maniac when he came, and that night, in some way which we never understood, he escaped, was gone, nobody can tell how long, but in the morning some attendants found him just this side of Custer's Bridge lying in the road almost dead. They took him up and brought him back here; but it's the greatest wonder in the world that he lived; indeed, if it hadn't been for the fever in his blood I know we never could have brought him round."

"I think, too, the exposure has made his entire recovery very uncertain, for since his more violent paroxysms have passed away he

has fallen into this melancholy state, which is the worst possible phase of mental derangement. Sometimes I'm tempted to doubt its being dementia at all, for he seems to be brooding with what I may call a degree of method; and then, again, I think the malady is incurable, he is so utterly beyond the reach of ordinary treatment. If there is anything which will bring him out of this sad state I think it will be such kind, judicious ministrations as yours."

"Then you may rely upon my faithfulness," replied Rachael, warmly. "I have become deeply interested in the poor man, and shall do everything in my power to release him from the terrible bondage in which he is held."

"It is really a terrible bondage," returned the physician. "A sane person can never imagine the sufferings of such unfortunate. This man's mania seems to be a tendency toward remorseful brooding. I have tried to lead him into conversation, but he is as shrewd as a well man, and always sees through my design, and frustrates it."

"Do his friends never visit him?"

"No; not since the night he was brought here have any of them been to the institution. They're a queer lot, I fancy. Humanity must be in the family, for Mr. Saunders hadn't been here three days before we got a letter from some of his people regretting the trouble their relative had given us, and saying that he died three days after his return. We never could make any sense of the letter—wrote back for an explanation, but got no answer, and have never since heard a word from them."

"What singular, what unnatural conduct toward such a poor unfortunate!" ejaculated Rachael, whose interest in her patient grew as she became acquainted with his sad history.

"By no means unnatural, though, ma'am," the physician returned. "There are plenty of heartless people in this world who would not hesitate a moment about shirking the responsibility of caring for a hopelessly insane relative. Saunders's people are not possibly over rich, and the expense of keeping him here frightens them, or he may not have any very near relatives, and they all rather dodge the trouble of caring for him; so the burden falls upon such institutions as this, with some little help which we manage to get."

From that moment Rachael Aveling's interest in the sick man increased, and in proportion as her interest grew, it seemed as though he progressed toward recovery.

If Rachael had possessed a nervous temperament or had she been less exalted and generous of nature, she would sometimes have tired of the ceaseless regard of those sad eyes. She would have grown restless under such daily, hourly surveillance.

But the faithful nurse had her compensations.

It pleased her to note the change which was being wrought by her care. She was glad to see a human eye brighten, a human face gladden at her coming, or grow clouded with regret at her departure.

It was very sweet also to this life-long lonely girl to see that this "Gentile," weak in body and in mind as he was, did not shrink from her touch—from the touch of a Jewess, and insensibly she began to look forward with pleasure to the cordial "good morning" which the haggard face would express, and to feel that in those regretful "good nights" there was a bond of human sympathy which she had never known before.

Thus the last days of winter and the opening days of spring wore rapidly away. Rachael was happy and contented in her new sphere, and Mrs. Markham, congenitally employed, never for a moment regretted her departure from Ashurst.

News from that neighbouring estate sometimes, but not often, came to the ears of the two refugees, for there existed no friendly relations between Mark Upton and the officials at the hospital; the former had too frequently endeavoured to encroach upon the benevolent interests of the latter for them to seek or extend any neighbourly civilities, so the two establishments were virtually as widely

separated as though counties divided them. The two nurses heard casually that the building operations at Ashurst, which for awhile had been unaccountably stopped, were again commenced with greater vigour than before; they heard that Upton made frequent visits to town, and that there had been installed in Rachael's old apartments a person whom nobody ever saw save Upton himself and his man Thomas—a person who never went out and whom no one ever came to see.

They heard, too, that Upton and his lawyers had quarrelled, and, for a time, the master of Ashurst wore a gloomy, forbidding countenance, but that more recently—since the arrival of the mysterious occupant of Rachael's old rooms, in fact—he had never been so cheerful, never so jocose and hilarious.

But all these reports made little impression upon the minds of the two busy nurses at Theobald's Hospital. For them the sun rose and set, not as it formerly seemed, at the bidding and behest of Mark Upton, but in the full, happy freedom of God's natural law. The days were made short by worthy occupation, and the nights sweet by well-earned repose.

Yet, all unknown to Rachael Aveling, there had been a time when a terrible danger hung over her head. A cloud threatened to gather at Ashurst which might have burst with destructive fury upon her, for her departure from her husband's house, her defiance and repulse of Upton, had so galled and stung that bold, bad man that, seething in his heart for some adequate means of revenge, he had planned a deeper crime than circumstances afterward made expedient to execute; for his avarice, smarting under the assurance of his legal adviser that by no means could he avoid sharing with his cousin's widow the proceeds of his estate, he began to weave a web as dastardly, so iniquitous that, had it caught and entangled the innocent victim for whom it was designed, the very stones would have cried, "For shame!"

Upton recalled all the circumstances attending Rachael's coming to Ashurst, her reluctant forced marriage; her harsh reception at her husband's home; her uncle's abandonment; her virtual imprisonment; and the galling thoughts which she must consequently have harboured.

He recalled to mind that mysterious midnight visit, that secret entrance at the young wife's window, the long conference, and afterward Aveling's sudden departure, followed almost immediately by his equally sudden return and by his attempted suicide.

Suicide? queried Upton, a vicious smile curling his lip. Was it a suicide or a murder? Did not he with his own eyes see Rachael, the abandoned, neglected, imprisoned, ill-treated young wife, rush forth from her husband's room, with the murderous pistol in her hand, and did he not afterward find it thrust into a hiding place in her own room?

When that effort failed—when Aveling was on the high road to recovery—did not the main part of Ashurst burn to the ground, and in the flames did not Edward Eveling miserably perish? Whose hand was it that started that incendiary fire? Who first discovered it and raised the alarm? It was Rachael, the same neglected, abandoned, imprisoned young wife.

She confessed that she was awake and astir that fatal night. She acknowledged that the fire had its origin in her husband's sick chamber. Upton, and all the servants at Ashurst, remembered her wild grief, her uncontrollable remorse, when Aveling's fate was ascertained, for thus the dreadful crime had recoil'd upon its perpetrator, and upon sick bed she had begun that atonement which Upton would petition the law to complete upon the scaffold!

In view, therefore, of these flagrant facts, would not the law bar the murderers from all participation in the benefit arising from her husband's death, and could not Upton thus secure sole and undisputed possession of the wealth upon which he had set his heart? All this, and more, the man planned, sitting in his own grim company at midnight in the Ashurst library.

(To be Continued.)



[A LITTLE DARLING.]

THE ORPHAN'S FRIENDS.

I CAN RECOLLECT IT ALL SO WELL! Papa was laid to rest in the village graveyard, and I, Elsie Clayton, was alone in the world. "What am I to do?" was the question which constantly presented itself.

I finally concluded to ask the old woman who had assisted me in keeping house since poor mamma's death.

"Do?" she repeated. "Why, child, I suppose you must go to the poor-house. Folks have more children than they can take care of without being bothered with other people's."

With that she left me.

"Go to the poor-house? Never!" I mentally exclaimed.

I awoke early the next morning, having resolved the previous night, before going to sleep, to start out in search of a new home. I packed a small valise with the few trinkets that I prized. This and my luncheon was all my luggage. I did not take my apparel, having my best clothes on, new black ones, and thinking these sufficient.

The sun was just peeping over the hills when I left the dilapidated stone house where we had lived during the past four years. I still thought it my home, and had some vague impression of coming back to live in it. The morning was

such a one as old English May mornings can be.

The road that I travelled was hedged with sweet smelling hawthorn. The lark was singing gaily in the sky, far out of sight. The inquisitive squirrels peeped from between the branches at the intruder. I almost forgot my sorrows in the beauty of the scene, and several times caught myself smiling at the antics of my morning companions.

On I walked, past the hedges, across open fields, over dusty roads, and between the hedges again. The day grew warm, and I became tired. I rested under an oak tree to eat my luncheon, then plodded on again until dusk, when I stopped at a little farmhouse, and asked for lodgings.

The woman, a Scotch widow, was scrupulously clean and kind-hearted. She had a large family of children, whose supper of bread and milk I shared, and slept with two of the youngest. After a breakfast of porridge and tea I prepared to proceed on my journey. At parting I offered the woman two shillings, all the money I possessed.

"Na, na, my lassie, I dinna need yer siller, and perhaps ye'll find it handy before ye reach yer journey's end."

Instinctively I put my arms around her neck, and kissed the rugged cheek. I was not a demonstrative child towards strangers, but this woman was so kind, and looked so motherly, that I could not help showing some expressions of gratitude.

She clasped me to her bosom, and her eyes were moist when she let me go.

"Guid-bye, puir bairn! I hope ye'll reach yer journey's end safely," were her last words.

A waggoner who overtook me on the road gave me a ride several miles, after which I trudged steadily along until the afternoon. I was tired and footsore, and longed for a resting-place; still I did not venture to enter any of the farm-houses until I came to a large white one. There was an air of plenty and comfort about the place that struck my fancy. A large, handsome garden lay in front of it, and extensive orchards stretched on both sides.

Timidly I opened the gate, and walked along the path. The large front door being open, I entered the hall, and knocked at the door on the right.

"Come in." I opened the door hesitatingly, and stood holding the handle, uncertain whether to enter or retire. Still it was a pleasing picture that met my view. A large, sunny, brightly-carpeted room. Pictures, dried ferns and grasses garnished the walls, and blossoming plants grew in the windows. A sweet-faced lady of perhaps forty sat sewing a girl's white dress. I took everything in at a glance. The lady looked up and seeing my hesitation, repeated the invitation.

I closed the door carefully, walked across the room noiselessly, and with clasped hands stood before her, waiting to be questioned. She ventured with a quiet:

"Well?" I was not afraid of her, and looked into her sweet blue eyes as I answered:

"I am tired and hungry, madame, and would be grateful for rest and food."

She folded her sewing, put it carefully away, went out and presently returned with bread and milk and fruit. How inviting they looked, spread out on the little, white-covered table!

"Come, child, and have some lunch."

Seeing that I did not offer to commence my repast, she inquired.

"Is there anything else I can do for you?"

"I am dusty," I answered. "Won't you please invite me to take off my hat and shawl, and give me a little water in which I might wash my face and hands?"

"You are travel-stained, poor child!" she said, pityingly. Conducting me into a child's bedroom, she left me, saying, "You will find everything you need here."

I hastened at once to make my toilet. I took off my dress, brushed it carefully, bathed my burning face in the clear cold water, unbraided my hair, and brushed it into long heavy curls. I was anxious to look my best, and took pains in arranging my dress. Being quick in my motions I appeared in the sitting-room in fifteen minutes from the time I left, feeling much refreshed. Gliding up to the lady, who was again at her sewing, and offering her my hand, I said:

"I must thank you, dear madame, in thus ministering to my comfort."

She took my hand in her own white one.

"You are welcome, my dear; now go and eat your lunch."

I was hungry, but would not be guilty of overeating; perhaps I ate sparingly for one who had not tasted food since morning. Noticing this, she remarked, kindly.

"Why do you not eat more? I thought you were hungry."

"I have had sufficient until dinner," I replied.

"You intend to remain, then?" she inquired, amused.

"With your permission, I shall make this my home. In the evening I will tell you my simple history, and perhaps you'll invite me to remain. But rest assured that I shall not stay unless you wish me to."

She smiled, and I heard her murmur:

"Strange child!"

At my earnest appeal for work she gave me

some sewing, and oh, how pleased I was when she commended my childish efforts!

Evening approached. A bright fire was kindled in the large, open fireplace, and two chairs were placed before it; a large, cosy lounging-chair, and a smaller one, apparently a child's. I was homesick for the first time since my arrival.

The solemn twilight hour makes the lonely heart feel its loneliness in all its bitterness. At twilight the shepherd gathers his flock in the fold, and the mother gathers her lambs around and awaits the coming of the beloved master.

Hearing a vehicle stop at the gate, I knew that the expected ones had arrived. Not wishing to intrude my presence during the meeting, I crouched in the darkest corner, there being no other means of escaping. Footsteps crunched the gravel walk, then ascended the steps, and a large, elderly gentleman entered, carrying a girl of eleven.

"There, papa, let me down; I am too heavy to be carried."

The voice was low, clear and sweet.

"Not till you kiss me for my trouble, pet."

He sat down in the big arm-chair, and held her until the required penalty was given, when he gently placed her in the small chair before alluded to, and passed out. She sat very still, and the firelight seemed to linger on her face and hair. A fair, beautiful creature; her face resembled the lady's, and was enshrined by shining yellow ringlets. I gazed in silent admiration, which was interrupted by the gentleman's re-entrance. He carried a little ebony crutch, which he laid gently beside her chair.

"I wonder where mamma is?" he asked, in a rich, round, cheerful voice.

"Oh, John, is that you?"

My dear, sweet lady rushed into the elderly gentleman's arms, and they kissed each other most affectionately.

"I have had a splendid time to-day, mamma," chirped the child.

"Have you, darling? I'm glad to hear it; but are you not very tired?"

"Not very. Papa insisted on carrying me into the house, so you know I am not very tired."

The mother took the girl's wrappings, after which they sat chatting around the fire, but the remainder of their conversation was lost to me.

Witnessing this family gathering opened the still fresh wound. Forgetting my surroundings in my sorrow, I hid my face in my hands, and thought of my loneliness without the tender love of the dear old father who would never more soothe me. Thinking thus, I wept softly; but a sob that would not be suppressed suddenly escaped from my bosom, and again I became conscious of what was passing in the room.

"Come here, my child; I did not know you were there. I have been telling Nettie's papa about you, and both he and Nettie are anxious to get acquainted with you."

I could neither move nor speak, but sat in my corner, weeping as if my heart would break. Mrs. Weatherly, as I may now call her, brought water, bathed my face, soothed and caressed me until the paroxysm was subdued. I was then provided with a low, cosy chair, similar to Nettie's, and told them my simple story, just as I tell it to you.

"My papa's name was Frederic Clayton. He was wealthy at one time, but in some way lost his money. We lived in London until this happened; he then determined to go to some place where he was entirely unknown. We came to N—— and lived in the large stone house on the hill. My papa had a small annuity, which ceased with him. My mamma was living when we came here; she died about a year ago. Papa grieved very much for mamma, and was never the same after her death. The people in N—— said we were proud and overbearing. Papa had no friend here except Edward Noble. He and I alone knew how good and loving he was. Mr. Noble was the village schoolmaster. He used to preach, too, on the green on Sundays, and he

could make all the people cry. Perhaps you know him; if you do, you may also know how grand and good he is. He took great trouble in teaching me, and I love him very dearly. I don't want to go very far away from my old home, for he may come back some time and take me to live with him. I want to go and see my papa and mamma sometimes, too. They might be grieved if I neglected to care for their graves."

Both Mr. and Mrs. Weatherly looked sympathisingly, while Nettie wept behind her handkerchief.

"The reason I came from home was that the house papa lived in was not his own. All the money I had was two shillings, and people said I must go to the poor-house. I would rather die than go there, so I made up my mind to seek a new home. I think that I should love you all very much, if you will let me stay with you. I will try very hard to be obedient and useful."

"Please, mamma, can't she stay?" softly whispered Nettie.

"What do you think, John?" asked Mrs. Weatherly.

"Come here, child," said he, taking my hand. "You may stay with us to-night; to-morrow I shall inquire about you. If your story is true—and mind, I don't doubt you—you may stay with us as long as you please, provided mamma is willing. And now, little one, what is your name, and how old are you?"

"My name is Elsie Clayton, and I was twelve the third of April."

My first evening in this new home was one never to be forgotten. Kindness soothed the orphan's heart, and peace reigned over all.

A sweet May morning. I paused on the steps my hands filled with violets and hawthorn blossoms, to drink in the beauty of the scene. Never was there a fairer morning. Bees and birds and flowers united in their praise of the Creator of all, and how could I help joining the general thanksgiving?

"Praise God!" welled up from my bosom. "Praise Him for his countless blessings!"

I was no longer a little orphan, homeless and friendless, but was budding into womanhood, surrounded by kind friends. During all these six years I was as carefully nurtured as my dear adopted sister. Surely I had reason for thanking the Almighty in thus providing me with father and mother.

I resolved, this bright May morning, to try harder than ever to comply with their wishes, this being the only means I possessed of repaying their kindness. I was aroused from my reverie by Mrs. Weatherly's calling.

"Elsie, Elsie!"

"Yes, mother?"

I had called her mother for many a day past.

"I thought you were standing on the damp grass, dear, and was afraid you would take cold."

Her look was loving.

"No, mother, I always try to do your wishes, now."

Standing beside me, she laid her hand gently on my arm.

"Nettie is ill again to-day, and wishes to see you. She is wearying for her sister."

"I shall go at once, mother. Do you think she will be able to leave her room to-day?"

"I think not, Elsie," shaking her head mournfully. "She suffered a great deal last night."

"Why did you not call me?"

"You needed rest, dear."

I kissed her, and hastened away. My gentle sister was often seized with great pain, and lay for days suffering intensely. During these attacks she could never bear me out of her sight and nothing gave me greater pleasure than to minister to her comfort. Becoming weary toward evening, I laid my head on her pillow, as she often wished me to, and soon fell asleep.

"There are my daughters, Dr. Noble."

'Twas father's voice. I started at the name, but it was too dusky to see the face distinctly.

No, it could not be my school-master, Noble, and why should I feel disappointed? Nettie was better the next day, and talked incessantly of the new doctor.

"Have you seen him, Elsie?"

"Not since last evening."

"He is altogether different from Dr. Green, he is so gentle in his treatment."

"I hope he may cure my sister. If he does, I shall think him quite as wonderful as my school-master, Noble."

Nettie smiled, and shook her head.

"I am afraid that can never be."

The new doctor stayed somewhere in the neighbourhood, and visited his patient daily. Nettie soon became well enough to make her appearance in the sitting-room. It was her first evening downstairs, and we sat before the fire, waiting for father. The gig came to the door, then father entered, his presence filled the room with brightness, as it always did. Someone was with him—Dr. Noble.

"Elsie, I have brought a friend to see you."

"I arose; Dr. Noble held out his hand."

"I did not expect to find my little pupil grown into such a handsome young lady," he was saying. I interrupted him.

"Oh, master, I am so glad you've come!"

It suddenly dawned upon me that this was my own dear schoolmaster.

"And I am more glad than I can tell to find you," he answered. "You see, Mr. Weatherly, that we are still very good friends. Miss Elsie was a favourite companion of mine when I was the village schoolmaster. What long talks and walks we used to have together! I declare! seeing you quite brings back the old time, although it is nearly seven years since I left N——."

"Where have you been all this time, mas—Dr. Noble?" I inquired, for want of something better to say.

"You know that I was always determined to become a physician, and left N—— with that intention. I studied in London and Glasgow, and was then called to France on some business. While there my uncle died, and left me heir to some ten thousand pounds. Having sufficient means to enable me to devote my whole time to my profession, I stayed there, and continued my studies. I received my diploma in Paris, about two years ago, but not being yet satisfied, visited Germany, Austria, and Italy, with a view to investigate the best modes of hospital treatment. While in Italy, I was called to attend a child, who bore a striking resemblance to yourself, Miss Elsie, when you were the same age. I did all I could for her, but my efforts were unavailing. The face of the little girl recalled to mind my old English home, and the pupil who had been my companion much of the time there.

"After her death I left Italy with the intention of visiting my old friends. I have been so busy since my arrival that it was impossible for me to go to N—— until to-day. Then I learned for the first time that you were an orphan, and a member of Mr. Weatherly's family. Mr. Weatherly introduced his daughters to me the first evening he brought me here. I suppose that in the excitement of the moment I did not notice your face, and since that time I have not had an opportunity of seeing you. You must forgive me for not recognising you at once. I did not think to find a woman in place of the child I left. This is another example of man's stupidity; for had I thought a moment, I would have known that seven years, added to a child of eleven, would make a great difference in her."

"I am afraid, Dr. Noble, that it is I who should plead for your forgiveness. I have seen you nearly every day from my window, coming and going, and yet did not recognise you. I really think that you must have changed as much as myself."

He laughed merrily.

"It's these outlandish whiskers. We doctors cultivate them in order to add to the general gravity of the countenance. But I'll sacrifice them to-morrow, if you wish it."

"You might rue it," I replied.

"No, not at all. Now that I am in a civilised country, it is only my duty to look less like a baboon, and more like a Christian."

All that remained of his luxuriant beard the next evening were a pair of the tiniest side whiskers, and again he was my own dear master, in appearance at least.

All through the beautiful summer Dr. Noble was a frequent visitor. I learned to watch for his coming, and my being thrilled with delight when he touched my hand at parting.

Nettie improved in health. Her eye had a new light in it, her cheek had lost its pallor, and there was a joyous ring in her laugh that we had never heard before.

Autumn advanced, and Dr. Noble's visits became fewer. His practice was growing, and the days were getting short, so that he had but little time for recreation. Nettie lost the summer gaiety, and became her old self again, silent and thoughtful.

We sat together, one dreary afternoon, she with book, and I with sewing. A long silence was broken by Nettie's shutting her book with a sudden snap. I looked up, and knew from her face she wished to say something.

"Elsie!"

"Yes?"

"Do you know that I am an altogether different person from what I was six months ago?"

"I thought so a few weeks ago, you appeared so light-hearted. Are you feeling ill again?"

"No, I am much better, but I am changed, and shall never be as I was. Before he came I was but a child; now I am a woman, with woman's passions. Do you understand me?"

"I hardly know."

"Then I will tell you. I love Edward Noble!"

Her cheeks crimsoned, her eyes brightened. I felt my own face grow pale even to the lips.

"Oh, Nettie!"

The words almost choked me.

"You, too, love him," she went on, "you who are young, and strong, and beautiful. I have read it in your eyes as you awaited his coming, and heard it in your voice as you welcomed him here. You are stealing his love from me—you, the outcast whom I have cherished as a sister. Is this the return for the love I have bestowed upon you? Go, Elsie Clayton, and leave him to me—to me, the poor, crippled creature who has so few joys to brighten her human existence!"

I knelt at her feet.

"Forgive me! I did not know of your love for him. Forgive me, and I will never see him again. My friend, my sister, I pray your forgiveness here at your feet!"

"Go—go!"

I arose and opened the door to pass out, but paused one moment on the threshold. She was standing with outstretched arms. My bosom was filled with anger, and I heeded not the pallid, pleading face. I heard the voice after I closed the door.

"Oh, Elsie, come back to me!"

It was almost a wail, but it had not power to call me back; my heart was still unforgiving. Such is human nature. All night I knelt by my bedside, thinking. I was tearless. My heart was filled with contending passions. Bitterness, anger, forgiveness, resentment, each had a share in my bosom. Hard, dry sobs escaped between my lips, but they gave no relief.

The morning came, calm and beautiful. Looking up, I saw the sun shining on a motto presented to me by Nettie:

"Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

My heart softened.

"Elsie, dear, let me in."

"Yes, mother."

I opened the door. The sweet face was pale and careworn, but the good-morning was as cheerfully spoken as usual, and the kiss as affectionately given. She took my hand, and led me to a seat. Her voice never sounded so sweetly before.

"Once a blessed man came among us—a man sent from Heaven to perform the most wonder-

ful of missions. He came on earth to save sinners, such as you and me. They repaid him with buffet and sneers. They tortured him to death. He had his revenge—he prayed for them. It was a part of his mission to undergo these tortures; he bore them cheerfully, and all he asks in return is that we forgive each other as he forgives us. Elsie, can you do it?"

My frame shook with sobs—not dry, hard sobs, but sobs accompanied by blessed tears. She took me in her arms and continued in the same sweet tone, only there were tears in her voice this time:

"Nettie has told me all. She is very anxious to see you and be forgiven. She is not to be long with us. We found her lying on the floor yesterday, and she sustained such serious injuries in the fall that she cannot recover."

"Mother, oh mother, I was the cause of it!"

My sobs had ceased, and my heart was being torn with a sharp pain.

"I will go from here," I gasped, and attempted to rise.

The kind hands held me firm. I let her do as she would. Gently she bathed my face and brushed my hair, soothed and caressed, and again I was comforted.

I entered Nettie's chamber alone. White and still she lay, with her golden curls scattered over the pillow. I stooped to kiss her. The white arms were around my neck.

"My sister, forgive me!" she whispered.

"It is I who wish forgiveness."

She smiled.

"Then we will ask forgiveness of our Heavenly Father."

Christmas was approaching; she was still spared to us. Dr. Noble did all he could to relieve her suffering, but could give us no hope of her recovery. She called us to her side on Christmas Eve.

"Dr. Noble, I want to speak with you to-night. I was never angry with Elsie but once. I fancied I loved you, and became angry with Elsie because she loved you too. I now know that it was a delusion. I do love you, but not as I fancied then. Since my illness I have watched you, and I know that Elsie is the one you most fondly cherish. Take her—I know that your affection is returned—and cherish her tenderly, for she is worthy of it. If you could get married before I go home, it would be another sweet drop added to the already brimming cup of happiness."

At her bedside, just a week afterwards, there was a quiet wedding. She looked more saintly than earthly in her white draperies and flowing ringlets.

"Bless you, my dear brother and sister. I am glad it took place to-night. I, too, shall be a bride ere the birth of the New Year."

We stayed near her. She was radiant with happiness while she stayed. Her spirit fled with the year. Peaceful she looked in her endless sleep, and why should we grieve that her sufferings were over. She was laid to rest beside my parents, and the pure white snow shrouded them all.

Edward purchased the old stone house in N—. After extensive repairs we went to live in it, taking father and mother with us. A silver-haired, beautiful old couple they are—down the hill of life together they wander hand in hand.

Their delight is our little Nettie, a fairy, winsome darling who never tired of asking questions about Aunt Nettie, and they never tire of answering them.

A. S. E.

Do our young readers ever think how little it takes to stain their characters? A drop of ink in a very small thing, yet dropped into a tumbler of clear water, it blackens the whole, and so the first oath, the first lie, the first glass, they seem very trivial, yet they leave a dark stain upon one's character. Look out for the first stain.

FACETIA.

Rules for Amateur Concerts.

(Deduced from invariable practice.)

If your voice be feeble, choose some stirring song of Santley's.

Nervousness is an advantage to a vocalist doing a "shake."

Accompaniments should be played loud enough to drown the voice.

The proper way to keep time when singing in chorals is to keep it to yourself.

In a duet it is lucky to have a partner with a weak voice. Yours may then "come out strong."

Always encore a song that is obviously a great strain on the singer.

Persons performing gratuitously should be severely criticised.

A "break-down" (in singing) should be greeted with roars of laughter.

So should all the most touching points of a serious song.

It is utterly unnecessary to pronounce the words of a song distinctly.

To be gazed at through opera-glasses much reassures a diffident amateur.

Any short-sighted person, or one who cannot read music, may be appointed to turn over the leaves.

Friendship or favour, rather than talent, should guide the amateur impresario in choosing his performers.

Invariably begin the programme with the overture to Zampa (pianoforte duet).

Music-masters will find it a good advertisement to put forward their pet pupils on these occasions.

The opportunity of getting one of your own unsaleable compositions sung, or played should never be missed.

If the audience is mainly of the humbler classes, treat them to one of Beethoven's sonatas.

If they are particularly "gentle," music-hall or nigger songs will be duly appreciated.

No concert is completed until somebody has sung "I fear no foe."

AFTER THE HOLIDAYS.

BROWN: "Jones, my boy, you haven't got half-a-crown about you that you don't want, have you?"

JONES: "Well, if you promise faithfully to return it."

BROWN: "Thankee. But—Confound it, this is a bad one!"

JONES: "Of course. You asked me if I had one I didn't want. Should I be likely 'not to want' a good one?"

FUNNY FOLKS.

"COOLDS WILL BE PREVALENT THIS WINTER."

(And no wonder.)

AUNTY: "What! Drinking in the morning, girls! And champagne, too!"

NIECE: "Ridiculous, aunty dear! We are all suffering from colds. The paper says colds result from the 'reduced energy of nerve centres,' which are best stimulated by copious draughts of champagne. We are only good little invalids taking our 'draughts'!"

FUNNY FOLKS.

AN EXPERIMENT.

MISTRESS: "Why, whatever is that smell, Jane?"

JANE: "Please, m'm, the brandy got spilt, and I—I done my best with the puddin, but I'm afraid it don't flare nice with paraffin!"

FUNNY FOLKS.

A GRATEFUL AUDIENCE.

FARMER WILLIAMS sold the old homestead and removed to London for the sake of his children's education. Having money enough to afford the best private lessons, he even bought a piano, and little Susan learned to play like a first-rate musician—at least in the estimation of her worthy parents. A few years after their removal, a farm-labourer from the old place

came to town, and paid a visit to his former master. The whole family were pleased with the old man's friendship; the children showed him their books and playthings, and little Susan opened the instrument to give him a proof of her newly-acquired accomplishments. When she had finished the piece, and looked round to see the effect upon her simple auditor, the latter exclaimed:

"Please, missie, may I make so bold as to ax why you have been a-doing that queer job?"

A MAN, who lost his good character some time ago, was severely hauled over by some of his former friends. "I know it, boys. I know my character's gone—lost entirely. And," he added, rather pointedly, "it's too confounded bad; for it was the only one in the place worth saving."

IT'S all very well to talk of economy, but the difficulty is to get anything to economise. The little baby who puts its toes in its mouth is almost the only person who in these times manages to make both ends meet.

"WHY, Willie," said his mother at dinner, "you can't possibly eat another plate of pudding, can you?" "Oh! yes, I can; one more plate will just fill the Bill."

"Fie! Mollie," quoth Reuben to Mary; "tis a pity we two can't agree." "Fie, Mollie," is good, sir," she answered; "but you'll find you can't Mollie-fie me."

CONSOLING.

CONDUCTOR (to Brown, who is pretty nearly pumped out with running to catch his express bus): "All right, sir, all right—don't hurry yourself, you're a-gaining." —Fun.

CHEAPER TO BORROW THAN BUY.

TOMMY: "What does it mean, Sissy, 'laying up something for a rainy day'?"

SISY: "Don't know, Tommy; 'speet it means borrowing a friend's umbrella and never returning it.'" —Fun.

OH!

WHAT is the difference between Policeman XI. and the Rinderpest law?—One is the man on the beat, and the other the ban on the meat.

—Funny Folks.

GUTTER-LONG WITH YOU?

IF "gutter literature" is known as "penny awfus," may not ultra-fashionable three-volume novels be called "guinea haw-hawfus?"

—Funny Folks.

FASHION AND PHYSIC.

(How ailments become the rage of the season.)

DUCHESS: "Neuralgia! What, that old thing again this season! Is there nothing new?"

FASHIONABLE PRACTITIONER: "Well, your grace, there is a novelty, but it is hardly 'in' yet. We call it neuritis diurna. Charmingly pretty name!"

DUCHESS: "Prescribe for me. I will take on myself to bring it 'in.'" —Funny Folks.

STEELING DEFENCE.

MAGISTRATE: "Well, prisoner, you have heard that you are charged with stealing these plated candlesticks. What have you to say?"

PRISONER: "Well, yer washup, on'y that I wouldn't ha' took 'em if I'd known as they was plated." —Funny Folks.

POMPEII.

IN a recent lecture a clergyman said that in 1748 the spade of a Spanish engineer first struck upon the buried ruins of the city. The city was buried at a depth of from twenty-three to twenty-six feet of ashes and volcanic mud. The lower half of the deposit consisted of dry ashes and small stones or scoria. Then comes about ten feet of volcanic mud. This was caused

by the heavy vapour of steam in the atmosphere which converted the showers of ashes as they fell into a plastic mass. Above this mud are the scoria and ashes of later eruptions, and the soil which has accumulated upon the surface.

Nothing, or very little, was burned in Pompeii. The heat was not sufficient to change the colours of the frescoes on the walls, and the woodwork was carbonised by its long entombment in such a soil. The lecturer defended the city against the charge so commonly made that it was an immoral and vicious city. It was a city of art and culture, and was inhabited by men of wealth and rare taste. If our modern cities were to be blotted out as Pompeii was blotted out, the future discoverer would find beneath their ruins evidences of vice and licentiousness to which Pompeii can give but little comparison.

THE BROKEN TOYS.

CORRIDOR, chamber and stairway

Still speak of the holiday train, Where the children are still having their

way

With the toys that unbroken remain; As bugle-peal flying from basement, Summons ringleted raiders to come Upon blue-eyed banditti in casement And doorway at beat of the drum.

But alone with my thoughts I am chambered.

A heap of old trifles before, The delight of some toddlers who clambered.

My knees in a Christmas of yore. Here are relics of anguries broken

In the rose-tinted dawn of their day; An unseaworthy ark that's a token Of a hope that went sailing away;

Here's a lorn jumping-jack and child's rattle

That to baby brains prompted a thought, While this sabre pressed a life's battle;

Crowned with laurels that never was fought;

And here, 'mid these fragments of camels,

Guns, zebras and wolves, and like sort, Lie the little worn shoes that all trammels

Of travel had levelled in sport.

Oh, poor broken toys of a pastime

That never again can arouse

Such echoes of mirth! not the last time

Are you haunting my memory's house.

Back, back in your drawer, in soft pity

I place you, to answer the call

From that raid of the blue-eyed banditti

That are trumpeting now through the hall.

There's the loud, laughing joy of the living,

With pleasure of new-fangled toys,

And the gifts that are sweet in the giving.

Are those which the Present enjoys;

But here, hidden away in recesses

Hardly guessed, I at times must explore

The relics the Old Time possesses

Of darlings whose laughter is o'er.

N. D. U.

GEMS.

UNSELFISH and noble acts are the most radiant epochs in the biography of souls. When wrought in earliest youth, they lie in the memory of age like the coral islands, green and sunny amidst the melancholy waste of ocean.

I HAVE searched for happiness in the elegant life of the drawing-room, in sumptuous banquets and in the dissipation of balls and theatres. I sought for it also in the possession of gold, in the excitement of gaming, in the illusions of

marvellous romances, but in vain; while one hour in visiting a sick person, in consoling one in affliction, in helping an unfortunate man, has sufficed to produce me enjoyment more delicious than all worldly delights."

"I HAVE no time to devote to my children," says the business man with a sigh, for he really feels the privation of their society keenly. But the excuse is an insufficient one; he should make time—let other things go; for no duty is more important than he owes his offspring.

MISCELLANEOUS.

THERE are now 1,200,000,000 acres of United States public lands still unsold.

SHOENCLIFFE camp is to be a permanent cavalry station for the future. £9,200 are to be expended at once to increase the accommodation.

THE batteries for the defence of the Medway will shortly be completed. The total cost will be £1,000,000.

A FASHION magazine says: "Ulsters will be worn somewhat longer this season." The men who wear them will have to wear stilts.

THE latest fashion now is for our golden youth to wear a small watch let into a round knot on the top of their walking canes.

MR. T. H. BRYANT, of the firm of Bryant and May, has offered to the Tower Hamlets a statue of Mr. Gladstone, as a birthday tribute. The statue will cost 1,000 guineas.

THE advocates of marriage law reform intend early in the ensuing year to hold a conference for the purpose of considering the marriage laws of various countries, so far as they affect the rights of Englishwomen who marry foreigners in this country.

THE Chancellor of the Exchequer, in addition to the many other large sums which have come in to aid his banking account in the shape of legacy duty, will receive at least from three to four hundred thousand pounds from the new Duke of Portland.

A GERMAN professor recently published a treatise on the art of living a hundred years, and the treatment to be followed is the eating of a number of lemons daily. If it proves successful, his system will probably be spoken of as the "lemon aid" to long life.

"LIABILITIES, £119,000; assets, £23 10s. 6d." That was a case in the Bankruptcy Court. And yet people die of starvation, and other people work for a living. It seems preposterous to be a bricklayer, or an author, or a chimney-sweep, or a curate, when you can owe £119,000 on an available capital of £23 10s. 6d.

THE Princess of Wales has had a new shooting costume made, of a ribbed woollen material that clings closely to the figure and is fastened on in some mysterious fashion, as puzzling as that of the Jersey. A double-breasted jacket with standing collar, and a jockey hat with folds and a knot for trimming, complete the costume.

DRILLING her class in poetry recently an Aberdeen teacher quoted from the familiar lines of Tennyson, "You must wake and call me early, call me early, mother dear." Now, she asked, "why did the girl want to be called early?" "Don't know," replied Tommy, "unless it was because that was her name."

IT is stated that the Dowager Lady Buxton has undertaken the education of one of the Zulu boys—natives of Zululand—who has been brought to this country. The boy, who was adopted by a regiment stationed at Plymouth, is now looked after by the officers, and regularly attends school, where he is making satisfactory progress.

IN connection with the project, which is to be laid before Parliament as a private Bill, for the construction of works connecting the English Channel with the private baths of London residents, we understand that the rent proposed to be charged for a constant supply of sea-water will be thirty shillings per annum on a house of £50 a year rent.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

PHILIP.—Arguments founded on statistics such as you give may be carried on endlessly without really proving anything. For example, in 1872 there were in Great Britain twelve and a half millions of acres under permanent grass. Would it benefit anyone to have his land forced into wheat growing? No, because cattle pay better than wheat, and if "parks" you mean unproductive land, half of which is arable, say, for wheat, you are mistaken. The twelve and a half millions named nearly equalled the whole amount in grain and green crops. More than three-fourths of Scotland's surface is barren, only four out of nineteen millions being cultivated in 1872. England has thirty-seven million acres, including much that is unfit for agriculture, though good for grazing, mining, and building upon.

M. H. P.—Henry II., who came to the English throne in the year 1154, was the founder of the Plantagenet dynasty. They are also called the Angevines, from Anjou, in France, which was the original principality or earldom of their race. Some writers say the Plantagenet dynasty ended with the deposition of Richard II. and the crowning of Henry IV., his successor, A.D. 1399. Other writers claim that as Henry IV. was himself a scion of a collateral branch of the Plantagenets the dynasty was continued in his line, and did not terminate until the ascension of Henry VII., the founder of the Tudor dynasty, in 1485.

S. C. G.—There are men with varied negative virtues, of whom people say, "There is no harm in them," but without positive qualities, who often suffer as you have done. In the end, however, some good woman begins by pitying, and ends in taking each unfortunate, so that you need not despair. When one lady has definitely declined your offer you are at perfect liberty to seek another—after a decent interval."

JENNIE.—We feel much pleasure in allaying your fears. There are, in authentic history, many undoubted cases of ladies giving gentlemen slippers and living in peace and harmony with them until death did them part. There are also, it must be admitted, cases of slippers being given by ladies to gentlemen in the hope of bringing about a union where the hope was never realised; but this did not arise from "luck" but from a certain rough idea of the fitness of things in the men, who thought that this was not the way to go about it. In reply to your final question, for ourselves we put the greatest confidence in good slippers. They are full of comfort, but to the onomata we attach little importance.

BELLA.—If you love one gentleman you should not pretend to love another, nor should you deceive either of them in the least degree. Behave in an honest, straightforward, lady-like way, and you will be apt to come out all right.

H. E. H.—The term "upwards of forty" means that a person is on the shady side or beyond forty years of age.

S. T.—There is no hard and fast rule on the matter. Each master has his own arrangements. May we ask what is the meaning of one who can write and compose as you do wishing to become a carpenter? Perhaps you are wise. Among the Jews every man, no matter what his position, learned a trade.

LINTS GREEN.—The Horograph is to be obtained of Messrs. Newton, Wilson, and Co., 144, High Holborn.

S. B.—Under the Married Women's Property Act, a married woman can invest or bank money in her own name which no one can touch without her sanction.

A SUBSCRIBER.—To make French polish powder and mix one ounce each of gums mastic, sandarac, seedlac, shellac, and arabic; dissolve in a bottle containing one quart of rectified spirits of wine, and add a quarter of an ounce of virgin wax. When it has stood for twelve hours it is fit for use. First wash the article to be polished with warm water containing a little washing-soda; then rub it perfectly smooth with fine sand-paper, stop up any openings with whiting coloured to imitate the wood, and apply your polish with twilled calico rolled round in the form of a hard mop. "Elbow-grease" has most to do with French polishing. Do not spare it.

ANCHOR JACK and COMPASS GEORGE, two seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with two young ladies with a view to matrimony. Anchor Jack is twenty-one, dark hair and eyes, medium height, loving. Compass George is twenty-two, tall, brown hair, blue eyes, fond of dancing and music. Respondents must be about nineteen.

E. E. G. and N. J. J., two seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with two young ladies. E. E. G. is twenty-one, tall, fair, dark hair and eyes, of a loving disposition, fond of children and music. N. J. J. is twenty-six, medium height, fair, brown hair, blue eyes, thoroughly domesticated, fond of home and music. Respondents must be between twenty and twenty-six, thoroughly domesticated.

ROSE and BERTHA, sisters, would like to correspond with two gentlemen. Rose is nineteen, tall, brown hair, hazel eyes. Bertha is of medium height, fond of home and music, light hair, dark eyes. Respondents must be between twenty and twenty-two.

TRIFLE and BEATRICE, two friends, would like to correspond with two gentlemen twenty-one and twenty-seven. Trifle is twenty-four, dark, fond of home. Beatrice is nineteen, fair, good-tempered, and thoroughly domesticated.

EVIE and BESSIE, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men with a view to matrimony. Evie is eighteen, fair, of a loving disposition. Bessie is twenty, dark hair and eyes, loving.

FRED H. would like to correspond with a young lady about nineteen, light hair, hazel eyes, fond of music and dancing.

E. S., forty-four, loving, domesticated, would like to correspond with a well-to-do tradesman.

VIOLET and POPPY, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men with a view to matrimony.

Violet is twenty-one, tall, dark, of a loving disposition, fond of home. Poppy is nineteen, fair, loving, domesticated.

CLARENCE G., twenty-five, would like to correspond with a young lady with means.

SHARED.

I SAID it in the meadow path,
I say it on the mountain-stairs,
The best things any mortal hath
Are those which every mortal shares.

The air we breathe—the sky—the breeze—
The light without us and within—
Life, with its unlocked treasures—
God's riches—are for all to win.

The grass is softer to my tread,
For rest it yields unnumbered feet;
Sweeter to me the wild rose red,
Because she makes the whole world sweet.

Into your heavenly loneliness
Ye welcomed me, O solemne peaks;
And me in every guest you bless
Who reverently your mystery seeks.

And up the radiant peopled way,
That opens into worlds unknown,
It will be life's delight to say,
"Heaven is not Heaven for me alone."

Rich through my brethren's poverty!
Such wealth were hideous! I am blest
Only in what they share with me,
In what I share with all the rest.

L. L.

LIZZIE D., twenty-two, fair, tall, would like to correspond with a gentleman about twenty-four with a view to matrimony.

LOUISE and BLANCHE, two friends, would like to correspond with two young men. Louise is nineteen, loving, fond of home, fair. Blanche is twenty, tall, brown hair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition. Respondents must be about twenty-five, dark.

NED and TED, two friends, would like to correspond with two young ladies with a view to matrimony. Ned is twenty-two, brown hair, hazel eyes, good-looking, of medium height, fond of home and children, dark. Ted is twenty-three, hazel eyes, dark, of a loving disposition, fond of dancing.

S., twenty-one, a seaman in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with a young lady about seventeen, tall, fair, of a loving disposition.

HOLLY and IRY, two friends, would like to correspond with two young gentlemen. Holly is eighteen, fond of home and children, dark. Iry is twenty-two, tall, good-looking.

MARGARET and ALICE, two friends, wish to correspond with two gentlemen with a view to matrimony. Margaret is twenty-two, fair. Alice is twenty-two, medium height. Respondents must be about twenty-eight, tall, dark, fond of home, loving.

GEAR, TACKLE, and TRAPS, three seamen in the Royal Navy, would like to correspond with three young ladies. Gear is twenty-one, medium height, good-looking, fond of home and children. Tackle is twenty-two, tall, light curly hair, fond of home and music. Traps is twenty-one, dark, blue eyes, tall, good-looking.

PENELOPE, twenty-one, medium height, dark, brown hair, hazel eyes, domesticated, would like to correspond with a gentleman with about £300 a year.

LILIAN and EVA, two friends, would like to correspond with two tall, dark gentlemen. Lilian is twenty, good-looking, medium height, dark hair and eyes, fond of home and music. Eva is fair, domesticated, good-looking, fond of home.

BEFF TOPSAIL TED, twenty-four, medium height, dark hair, blue eyes, would like to correspond with a young lady about twenty-one.

CARRY, twenty-six, dark hair and eyes, domesticated, would like to correspond with a young gentleman about the same age.

WORKING MAN, twenty-six, medium height, fair, of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a respectable young lady.

J. M. H., twenty-eight, a mechanic, fair, good-looking, would like to correspond with a young lady about twenty-three with a view to matrimony.

ANNIE and POLLY, two friends, would like to correspond with two seamen in the Royal Navy. Annie is nineteen, dark curly hair, blue eyes, medium height, of a loving disposition.

EMMA, ALICE, and ESTHER, three friends, would like to correspond with three tradesmen. Emma is eighteen, fair, good-looking, medium height. Alice is dark, of a loving disposition, medium height. Esther is tall, fair, blue eyes, loving. Respondents must be between twenty and twenty-four.

M. M., twenty-one, dark hair, blue eyes, handsome, medium height, would like to correspond with a good-looking young lady.

JACK, twenty-one, a seaman in the Royal Navy, good-looking, would like to correspond with a young lady about nineteen.

C. E. W., twenty, fair, brown eyes, of a loving disposition, would like to correspond with a young lady about nineteen.

ROGER, EDWIN, and ROBERT W., three seamen in the Royal Navy, wish to correspond with three young ladies with a view to matrimony. Roger is twenty-five, dark, fond of children, and medium height. Edwin is twenty-two, medium height, light hair, blue eyes, of a loving disposition. Robert W. is twenty-one, black hair and eyes, fond of music and dancing.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

H. T. is responded to by—H. M., nineteen, medium height, blue eyes, loving.

E. G. C. by—Leontine, eighteen, brown hair and eyes, tall, dark, of a loving disposition, fond of home and children.

M. P. by—Clemence, nineteen, tall, fair, dark blue eyes, fond of home and children.

W. G. R. by—L. M., dark, of a loving disposition, and domesticated.

FLORINE by—Albus, twenty-one, medium height, good-looking.

L. S. R. by—Loving Lizzie, tall, brown hair, blue eyes, fond of home.

AL by—Craven.

BOS by—Careful.

MABEL by—A. V., twenty, tall, fair, and in a good position; and by—X.

REGINALD by—Flora, nineteen, dark, good-looking.

GEORGE by—Nellie, nineteen, tall, dark, and good-looking.

BLANCHE by—W. H. T., twenty-four, good-looking, dark, fond of home and music.

LILY by—Smiling Tom, twenty-four, fond of children, good-looking.

ROSIE by—Comes Up Quick, twenty-four, of a loving disposition.

EDITH by—Coming Up, Sir, twenty-four, good-looking, fond of dancing.

BLANCHE by—Rock, thirty, tall, dark.

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